THE MEN OF KILDONAN

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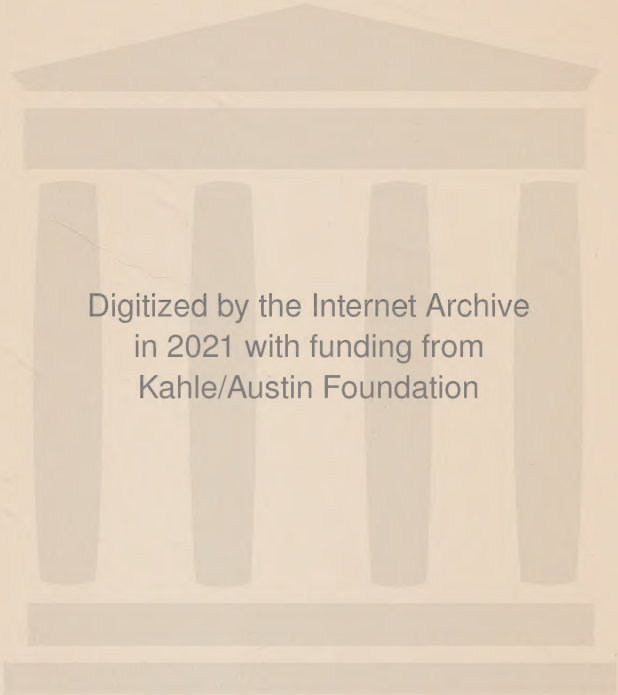
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THE MEN OF KILDONAN

A ROMANCE OF THE SELKIRK SETTLERS

BY

J. H. McCULLOCH

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THE MEN OF KILDONAN
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CONTENTS

		PAGE
	Preface	vii
	Prologue	ix
CHAPTER		
I	The Plight of the Crofters	15
II	An Encounter with Patrick Sellars	24
III	Leaving the Strath	33
IV	The Outbreak of Ship's Fever	43
V	Through the Ice-fields	52
VI	The Landing at Fort Churchill	62
VII	Lost in the Muskeg	69
VIII	The Traitors at the Fort	76
IX	Running the Gauntlet	84
X	The Grey Devils of the North	90
XI	Scurvy Breaks Out	100
XII	Our Firearms Are Confiscated	108
XIII	"Cothrom na Feinne!"	120
XIV	James Sutherland Preaches a Sermon	129
XV	The Trek to Fort York	134
XVI	The Dance at Hayes River	143
XVII	Tracking Up the Hayes	148
XVIII	The Warm Breath of Spring	155
XIX	"Misanahagan"	161

CHAPTER		PAGE
XX	The Accident at the Falls	167
XXI	Gathering Clouds	174
XXII	The Pursuit	182
XXIII	John MacLeod Decides to Fight	198
XXIV	The Return of the Bois-Brules	211
XXV	The Massacre of Seven Oaks	222
XXVI	A Midnight Swim	231
XXVII	The Signal Across the Red	238
XXVIII	Portents of Peace	247
XXIX	The Earl Arrives at the Forks	252
XXX	The Earl Concludes His Tale	261
XXXI	The Treaty That Brought Peace	269
	Epilogue: A Concluding Word	274

PREFACE

It was my great good fortune to be born and reared in the Ancient Kingdom of Galloway,—a land steeped, as no other land is steeped, in the traditions of the Douglas Family. Lincluden, where I was born; Sweetheart Abbey, in the shadow of which I grew to young manhood,—these are monuments to the great name that Lord Selkirk bore. St. Mary's Isle! Here Scotia's Immortal Bard found kindness and appreciation at the Selkirk fireside at a time when the winds of misfortune had well-nigh extinguished the flame of his genius. Selkirk! 'Tis indeed a name to conjure with in Galloway.

In more recent years I have been much in Kildonan, where the mundane affairs of life threw me into close contact with the descendants of the Selkirk Settlers. Many an hour have I spent in the company of S. R. Henderson (Sam Bob, my dears!), and from him I learned many things concerning the old days of which my tale deals; his grandmother, he relates, was born in a tiny tent among the snowy wastes some forty miles North of Fort York!

These circumstances considered, I may be pardoned for digging in soil that has already been deeply stirred by historians. I desire to acknowledge the debt I owe to Hargrave, Gunn, Bryce, Begg, and MacBeth. But most of all I owe to Professor Chester Martin. His monumental thesis on Lord Selkirk's work in Canada

is at once a literary and historical classic, and from this arsenal of historical lore I have helped myself liberally. In my own researches I stumbled upon considerable obscure material bearing upon the history of Kildonan; this material will be recognised, and welcomed, by all students of Manitoba's history.

The writer of a historical romance is permitted to take liberties with historical facts. The establishment of the Selkirk Settlement occupied more than a decade. Several contingents of settlers came from Ireland and Scotland *via* Hudson Bay, and each emigration had its peculiar features. To overcome an almost insuperable barrier to continuity of narrative, I merged these emigrations into the most important and interesting one,—that of the men of Kildonan. The historian will immediately discern certain anachronisms that inevitably result, but I hasten to caution my kind readers against regarding this tale as a precise historical document. It is, rather, an attempt to clothe the dry bones of historical data with flesh and blood, and I do sincerely hope that the historian will be first among my readers to acknowledge that the composite movement brings, out of the dim past, a reasonably faithful picture of the great Highland hegira that gave birth to Western Canada.

J. H. McC.

PROLOGUE

It is fitting that I, Donald Stewart, of the Parish of Kildonan, should set down, in black and white, some of the things that befell the Selkirk Settlers during their strange and trying journey from the strath of Kildonan in the Scottish shire of Sutherland, to the banks of the Red River here in Assiniboia. For one thing, I was part and parcel of that desperate expedition, and oddly enough, I kept a diary book through it all, in which, being young and impressionable, and no little proud of the advanced schooling I got from Doctor Ian MacGregor, than whom, in his day, there were few more learned men in the Highlands, I made compendious entries at times. Then I must own that I inherit a penchant for writing from my mother's branch of our family tree, though up till now it has found vent in periodic letters to the scurrilous journals that circulate hereabouts of late years, the same dealing with matters of local government. Of which, I may add, these new-come settlers from Upper Canada (and others who should know better) seem scandalously ignorant and careless,—a condition of affairs that, if not soon rectified, will cause serious trouble hereabouts one of these fine days.[1] Moreover, as Andrew McDermott has observed more than once, there is a

[1] Undoubtedly a reference to the unfortunate conditions, symbolised at the time by *The Papineau Standard,* that led up to The Northwest Rebellion, precipitated by that brave, but ill-starred figure, Louis Riel.—J. H. M.

danger that the bitter experiences of the settlers—on land, sea, and river—may be left untold. For in this, as in most other matters of Empire history, the importance of its political aspects is apt to be magnified as time passes, while the stark experiences of the settlers themselves are left to the tender mercies of legend.

And so I shall set down as best I can, and it may be in rough enough fashion, the record of our experiences. The doing of it will help to fill in the long slack evenings between now and spring, for on this, the third day of October, 1836, the snow is a foot deep, and the land under it as hard as iron. But I am not complaining. The autumn ploughing was all done before the snow came, and the wheat threshed and hauled to the mill. And never, since I settled here by the Red River, have I had so much good hay in the barn and stack. True, there is firewood still to be cut, and cattle to feed (and thanks to my man Sandy, who takes to his liquor at awkward seasons, three calves will be dropped in January). But, as I say, there is much to be thankful for, and the cosy evenings, free from harassing cares, are mine till the ice goes out again. A better opportunity to write down my story may not come again. So, with my well-thumbed diary book before me, and an immediate abundance of tamarac in the woodshed, I shall set down the things that happened to us between the fateful days of the Kildonan evictions and the present, which, thanks be to Providence, finds us who survive in comfortable enough surroundings.

It may appear that I deal harshly with certain of his Lordship's agents, but at times they dealt none so

gently with us. The years that have passed by have mellowed my judgment of Miles Macdonell; he was a sorely tried man and I believe that, under his harsh exterior, he nurtured a great kindness towards us. But Owen Keveny will be none the worse of a more kindly-disposed chronicler than I am likely to be. About the much-abused Earl himself I will speak no ill word. He was a Douglas of Galloway, and never a one of that breed better typified the bleeding heart on their banner than the fifth Earl. I, Donald Stewart, saw him move among us here in Kildonan, in the old stark days when every hand in the country—save those of his colonists—was turned against him. I saw his eyes fill with tears as he saw the extremity of our suffering. I, Donald Stewart, assert that his colonisation policies were conceived in a spirit of benevolence and far-sighted patriotism. But alas, in the working out of them, lives were blasted, and stout hearts broken.

I, who know these things, find it hard not to give way to bitterness at times as the memory wings back to the terrible days. But such bitterness as remains is because our worst sufferings were brought down upon us by men of our own blood,—the greedy, heartless, and unprincipled directors of the Northwest Company. These men of Nineveh, and their swaggering minions, were without bowels of mercy, and the day will yet come when their machinations will be exposed. And that day will find them without honour, "with no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem." For these ruthless men cast the evil shadow across the path of the brave and kindly Earl of Selkirk, as he tried, by

peaceable means, to win this vast country for his people.

Yet I desire to be fair to all parties, and of my fairness the reader must judge from the facts, which are all attested. Discount my opinions as you will. For myself, I have little now to complain of, and indeed much to be thankful for. My reward, who, even as I write these words, sits knitting by the inglenook, was worth ten times the sufferings I endured, and gladly would I run the gauntlet again to win the same prize. But for some of the others my heart contracts sorely, and the mist comes unbidden to my eyes. Even as I sit here to-night, in this fair and fat country, my memory takes me back to the bleak solitudes of Hudson Bay, and I see again the wasted bodies of bairns that grat in vain for food, and the hollow, frost-bitten cheeks of the women that bore them. Ay, and worse sights than those! Stark and terrible things must enter into my narrative. But tell them I will, for I declare that these folk of whom I now speak, though unskilled in the black art of selfishness, and, as some might say, rude of manner, were brave and patient beyond all telling, and established the Kingdom of God Almighty in these heedless parts. And so to my story.

THE MEN OF KILDONAN

CHAPTER I

THE PLIGHT OF THE CROFTERS

THE night had fallen down on the Strath of Kildonan. It was the month of March,—ever cold and blashy in the Shire of Sutherland, and a snell wind blew in from the sea, which heaved yeastily in the thin moonlight. Through the door of our shieling, when it opened to admit the folk who were gathering around our peat fire, came the quavering bleating of new-born lambs in near-by buchts,—the plaintive crying that shepherds hear when dwining lambs dunt cold noses into the scanty bags of scraggy, starving ewes. Pasturage was never plentiful in the Strath, but in the month of March, in the year 1813, the hillsides were utterly desolated. Where snow did not smear the brae-faces, the assiduous agents of the Duchess of Sutherland had fired the bent till no green spot remained, and even the whaups, which nested early, had retired to the higher solitudes of the hills. Well I remember how my father, with averted eyes but deft hands,—and all the while cursing the new landlords by the Dogs of Lorn, slit the throats of our few gangling lambs that spring, so that the mothers of them could be the easier driven to market.

But on the inside of our shieling door, on the night of which I speak, all was snug enough. The peat fire glozed redly, the blue reek curling up to the vent in

the roof, where it was whisked away as if by a giant's fan. The cruisie-light burned cheerily, over in the corner at the bed-foot my mother sat spinning, and such stools as our shieling afforded sat warmly by the hearthstone. The people of the Strath were gathering round my father that night. As I say, it was the year when alien landlords made good their threat, oft-heard but scarce believed by the crofters, to clear the glen of its struggling inhabitants. Once started, the harsh business of evicting was carried out with cruel efficiency. Very few of the crofters but owed rent to the Duchess of Sutherland, lately come to our country, and such were evicted, according to the letter of the law, from their poor holdings. These unhappy hill-folk knew little of the busy world out-by, and, like homeless tykes, remained in the Strath, to be fed by their neighbours by day, and stealing back to their cold hearthstones under cover of night. The agents of the Duchess, however, were not to be thus thwarted, and the emptied shielings were given to the flames, leaving their former tenants to the charity of their more fortunate neighbours.

Among the latter was my father, who, by natural shrewdness, and uncommon skill at shepherding, was able to meet the term-day without defaulting. So, in those stark days, the withie was never across our door, for stern man though he was, my father was a good neighbour. Forbye, he hated, with a cold, steady hate that sat quiet in the very vitals of him, the town-bred men who, with their parchment and wax, harried our kith and kin across the face of the Strath.

One by one the men of Kildonan gathered at our

fire, but little was said, for most of them were homeless, and of these but few were accustomed to our fireside, and not ready with the talk in the presence of my father, who had the name of being thoughtful. In all, eleven men sat uneasily in the peat smoke,—William Finlay, John Cooper, Magness Isbister, William Wallace, Duncan MacDonald, Thomas McKim, John McLennan, Dugald MacBeath, Ian MacKellar, Duncan MacCallum (or MacCallum *Mhor*,[1] as he was more commonly called) and James Sutherland. All of them, excepting the last-named, were dispossessed crofters. James Sutherland was a carpenter, and he was held in notable respect on account of his uncommon knowledge of the mathematics, and his skill as a catechist. Uncommonly tall and stout-thewed were these kilted men; courage, patience, and sagacity were writ deep into their grim, anxious faces.

My father was the first to speak. "Campbell Mhor, he will not likely be here," he said. "His woman was taken down this afternoon, and Campbell Mhor he has gone for the skilly woman."

" 'Tis so," said William Finlay. "I heard the groans of his woman as I passed the shieling."

"Ay," answered my father, "the women of the Campbells labour long and sorely, and the weans will aye come at the mouth of the morning."

There was silence for a while, except for the sound of my mother at her wheel, and then my father spoke again: "You have seen the Duchess, Sutherland?"

"I have done that same," replied James Sutherland, "but there is no reason in the woman. Her mind is set

[1] Big MacCallum.

against us. 'Your Grace,' I said, 'will surely consider the feelings of your old tenantry. These hills are dear to us. Our forefathers dwelt here in the Earl's time, and if the need arose, we would carry the fiery cross for you, even as our fathers carried it for him.'

"The woman laughed in my face! 'Tell your people,' she said, 'that the assurance of their loyalty is pleasant hearing, but of little value unless the rents go with it.' "

"The haughty bitch!" broke in John Cooper, his peat-smoked face working convulsively. "Well she knows that the corn has rotted black for two years on end."

"All that I told her," continued James Sutherland calmly, "and more besides. But it was to no avail. I tell you, people, the leaven of sense is not in the woman. 'The Earl,' I said to her, 'was lenient with us at times, but the rents always came in.' 'Don't talk to me about the Earl,' says she. 'The Earl did this, and the Earl did that! I care not what the Earls did. Well I know that had they been firmer with their crofters, their affairs had been in better order.'

" 'That may be,' I replied, 'but the Earls were well loved here in the Strath.' "

"What said the *Oinseach* (female fool) to that?" queried my father sharply.

" 'Tis better passed over, Ewen," answered James Sutherland. "I tell you the woman shames the blood that flows in her veins. She has dwelt too long in Babylon."

"But what said she?" again queried my father, for he was ever one to stick to his point.

"Well, if you will have it," went on the catechist,

"she waved her fan till the thing broke, and cried at me: 'You are an insolent lot, for all your meekness of mouth. I will have no more dallyings with you. Tell your people to clear themselves, their children, and their chattels from my holdings,—and at once.'

" 'I will do that same, Madam,' I said, 'though 'tis a pitiful task you have laid upon me.' And with that I bade her a civil farewell, but she paid no heed to me,—standing there by the Earl's chair biting her lip like a chidden child."

A profound silence followed the rendering of Sutherland's report. My mother no longer whirled the wheel, but sat with her head drooped forward and her quick hands lying idle in her lap.

James Sutherland spoke again. "It is the end of the road, people. We are to be driven forth with the rest like stots to the March market. God keep us! The Strath will know us no more. I have seen this coming. The old days are gone. Kindness, for which the old Earls were namely, is no more among these hills. Strathnaver is wiped out. Not a township remains. I saw Sellars put the torch to Ceann-na-Coille, where I was born. Grumb-mhor is burned to the ground. Nought but reeking ashes remain of Achmhillidh, Dalmalarn, Sgall, Ealan à Challaidh, Langall, Coile an Kian, Rossal, Dalvina, Achphris, and Totachan. Sellars is boasting that Kildonan will fare worse than Strathnaver,—and like enough he will make good his boast, for we have no friends. Even our Ministers have forsaken us."

"Save godly Mr. Sage," said my father quietly. "Save godly Mr. Sage," repeated the catechist. "He

alone has dared to cry from his pulpit: 'If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I shall surely hear their cry, and my wrath shall wax hot.' "

" 'Tis all truth that you speak, Sutherland," said my father slowly, and being ever a practical man, he added: "We cannot stay here to rot on the shore, and we cannot go South. There is nothing for us there but beggary, or drudgery under the roofs of manufactories. I am for going to this country called Assiniboia, of which the Lord Selkirk of Galloway speaks."

"He that flits loses much!" muttered Thomas McKim in a moody voice.

"A sound old-word, McKim," went on my father, "but flit we must. Then why not to Lord Selkirk's domain, where there is good land for the taking? Others have gone before us."

"So I have heard," said Magness Isbister hopefully, "but Sellars, the agent of the Countess-Duchess, tells me that the country is a wilderness peopled by murderous savages."

"Curse his eyes," ejaculated my father with a harshness not usual with him. "And curse his name, for 'tis a name that will stink as long as heather grows in the Highlands. 'Tis the name of an oppressor of women and weans. 'Tis the name of a coward. God blast the breed,—root, stem, and branch!"

And no man demurred at my father's sudden and unwonted vehemence, for in good truth the name of the new agent of the Duchess was greatly hated throughout the broad Shire of Sutherland.

"I have seen the prospectus issued by the Lord Selkirk," said James Sutherland, "and if it be half true,

Assiniboia is a land of promise indeed, with black soil seven feet deep and no stones, wood in abundance, fish and game for the catching, and great stretches of grass as thick as heather before the spring burning."

"And Red Indian savages to murder the women and bairns," said my mother suddenly, and all looked at her sharply.

"Hush, *M'eudail*" (my treasure), said my father. " 'Tis lies, and black lies, that are told in the Inverness *Journal* by folk who hide their names.[1] 'Tis like enough that Red Indians abide in the territory. They travel about in clans, and fight with the dirk."

"They will be neighbourly enough then, whatever," observed Ian MacKellar.

"If they fight with the dirk," said MacCallum Mhor, deliberately, in the tone of one stating a plain fact, "they will bother us but little. A Red Indian is no more fearsome than a red Highland bull ranting over the heather."

And all looked at MacCallum Mhor and nodded their heads appreciatively. MacCallum Mhor of Borobal was a giant of a man, with great sinewy arms like the thighs of a bull, and massive hands that were covered to the nails with blue-black hair. On the hills the previous year, he was attacked by a mad bull, and in plain sight of peat-cutters who came hirpling over the slippery heather to his aid, he came to grips with the roaring beast, a murderous horn held in each hand. There, with the tawny bull rearing and wrenching and

[1] An allusion to the poisonous letters, signed "Highlander," that originated in the Council Chamber of the North-West Company at Montreal, and which gave Assiniboia a bad name indeed.—J. H. McC.

slashing with his front feet, MacCallum Mhor braced his mighty body, and twisted the bull's head so that it fell over on its side. Then, quick as forked lightning, a dirk flashed high in the air,—and once again. When the peat cutters, wet with fear, came panting on the scene, a dead bull, with its eyes starting from its head, and blood oozing from two punctures between its front ribs, lay on the heather, and MacCallum Mhor was wiping his dirk on its quivering flank. A substantial man was MacCallum Mhor,—and the problem of the Strath when in his cups, particularly if my father chanced to be away driving sheep. For at such times, though a peaceable man ordinarily, the man from Borobal was boisterous and quarrelsome, and none but my father could strive with him to any purpose.

But Red Indians or no, the men who sat in the peat-reek that night were keen about Assiniboia, for indeed far-off lands look green at all times, but wondrously so to the landless and oppressed. And so the talk went round about the Land of Promise, and the man from Galloway who talked the two talks, and who, alone among the landlords of Scotland, proffered a helping hand to the homeless Highlanders.

"Put a tune on her," said my father at last, handing his pipes to Duncan MacDonald, and the roof of our shieling seemed like to lift as Duncan set himself to the tuning. "The Glen Is Mine" was the *piobaireachd* [1] he played, and when his finger dwelt long on the deep note, which is namely for the pride of possession, my mother dropped her head forward and I saw the tears drop fast

[1] "The big music" of the bagpipe,—usually a stately theme greatly elaborated.

upon her folded hands. And when Duncan ended his tune, he handed the warm pipes back to my father, who put them away without a word, which was a notable thing to do among men who were wont to pass the pipes from one to the other. And only my mother spoke, and I mind her words as if she had spoken them yesterday. "Play it no more in the Strath, Duncan," she said, "for it's the *Uiseag* (skylark) that will sing it now."

After that such as had bothies to bide in went home, and the others slept in our byre, which opened from our kitchen. James Sutherland was the last to go, and with a finger on the door-sneck, he turned to my father and said: " 'Tis a sad day for the Strath, Ewen, but it is the hand of fate, and we must go." And my father said nothing at all, but stood looking out at the sky, which even then glozed redly here and there as the remaining townships of Kildonan, before the torches of Sellars and his men, went smooring upwards into the lift.

CHAPTER II

AN ENCOUNTER WITH PATRICK SELLARS

THE following evening found my father and James Sutherland in earnest consultation at our peat-fire. Observing which, I took the road to the Sutherland shieling, which nestled prettily among the hazel trees half a mile up the Strath. As I wended my way thereto, by private short-cuts mainly, I passed the *larachs* (ruins) of townships, some of them still reeking. Through the murk I could see shadowy figures moving about the ashes, but upon my approach these figures disappeared speedily among the trees by the burnside, for these homeless crofters were being ruthlessly dealt with as trespassers in the glens where they were reared. Back and forth across the Strath came the bellowing of starving cattle-beasts, a chorus mournful enough to make Pales weep. The wrath of God had seemingly descended upon the fair Parish of Kildonan. Indeed the parish ministers, surely as fushionless a pack of mortals as ever found sanctuary in Sutherlandshire, expounded that grim but convenient doctrine from their pulpits. The crofters were without spokesmen, yet there was much to be said on their side. They had the notion that they enjoyed a hereditary right to their holdings. These folk were products of the kindly old feudal system, when rents were paid, as often as not,

with the claymore and Lochaber axe. Thus the rhyme, a copy of which came into my hands some years back:

When I was young, a thoughtless lad,
Along the banks of 'Naver,
Soldiering was then the trade
That got us lands and favour.
Then Angus and Ronald, and Iver and Donald,
Had mutton and beef of flavour,
Had sheep and wool, and pantries full,
And dainties sweet of savour.

But soon, Alas! it came to pass,
That sheep got high in favour,
The lady grand, that claimed our land,
Was led by Factor Slave-her!
When Angus and Ronald, and Iver and Donald,
Who'd fight and die to save her,
In sad dismay, were forced away,
From 'Donnan, 'Shin, and 'Naver.

Twenty thousand, 'long the shore,
'Mongst rocks and moors are starving,
Without a prospect any more
To rise by their deserving!
While trampled o'er they're by a score,
Who all the power reserving,
Of hoarding princely wealth in store
As clear to all observing.

The conquests of Cromwell, and the melancholy issue of the rebellion of 1715, had not yet disillusioned the people of these tranquil Straths. The only landlords they had knowledge of were the old chieftains, and the antient connexions, at the time of which I write, had not yet worn away. So my folk, and others with them, argued that they had won the right to their

holdings by fighting for them. It was an argument with much reason in it, but it carried pitifully little weight with the Earl of Stafford and the young heiress of Sutherland, who had, in good truth, been reared far from Zion. These two hedonists dragged a proud name in the dirt, and all the hectical charity that now flows from Dunrobin Castle will not cleanse the fair banner of the old Sutherlands of the red blot that was put upon it in the stark days of the evictions.

The sheep from the lowlands were driving the crofters from the braefaces of Sutherlandshire. Three sheep could clip a fat living from the outfields and braefaces where only one black cattle-beast could thrive, and the shepherds from the South far outbid the crofters for the land they lived on. The jingle of Southern money was too much for the new lairds (though even now, by all accounts, the new tenants are doing no better at term day than the crofters did) and so the factors and their minions set about the grim business of driving out the tenantry. Even so, much bitterness and suffering could have been avoided had the Countess-Duchess chosen kindly men to carry out her callous injunctions. But Patrick Sellars her factor was utterly ruthless, with no pity in him for man or beast. Men hissed his name through their teeth, and for many a day bairns cowered close to their mothers' skirts at the mention of his name. I had never laid eyes on the persecutor, except from a distance, but on this night of which I write I was to learn more of him.

As I threaded my way through the dense hazel growth by the burnside, I became aware of a red glare ahead, and as I stopped to observe it the wailing of

women and the cursing of men came plainly to my ears. Running like a deer, I came at length to the township of Badinlosgin, which, as I had guessed, had just been set afire by Sellars and his men. I burst in upon a daunting scene. Men, bearing torches, ran from bothy to bothy, like imps of the evil pit, cursing the crofters as they ran. Women wailed, and children whined in terror as the flames greedily swept the thatching. The men-folk of the little township seemed cowed and dumbfounded by the determined activities of the burners, and stood impotently beside their women and children. Suddenly a great cry went up as William Chisholm, a spoonmaker by trade (and a feckless but decent man), rushed forward into the firelight. The poor man ran straight to Sellars, crying distractedly: "Save my mother! Save my mother! She is bedridden in our bothy yonder." But Sellars pushed the puny man aside roughly, and ordered his men to put their torches under the thatch of the Chisholm bothy. Hardened as they were, the men hesitated, and this enraged the factor. "Put the torch to the hovel, and let the old bitch roast," he shouted, advancing upon his men threateningly. But even yet his men hesitated, and as they cowered uncertainly before their master I dashed forward and confronted him.

"You'll not be burning the old woman," I shouted in his face, and I made ready to fly at him with my bare hands.

" 'Tis the Stewart whelp," exclaimed Sellars with a great oath. Then, advancing upon me with his hand lifted to strike me, he roared: "Get back to your bed, kilted brat, while you have a bed to lie on. And tell

your meddlesome father that Patrick Sellars is keeping the best bonfires till the last of the burnings."

"Tell him yourself," I cried. "You are a great coward, and you have left our shieling to the last because you are afraid of my father. Well you know that he has sworn to break you in two if you put foot across our doorway."

The wailing people had gathered behind me, agape at my outspokenness.

"Stoutly spoken, Donald, and 'tis the sore spot you touched. 'Twill take a better man than Patrick Sellars to turn Ewen Stewart out of doors."

It was the voice of our Minister that uttered the words, and upon being confronted by the Reverend Mr. Sage, the Factor cast a hurried look about him, as if he feared an attack, turned his back upon me, and strode away to his sullen men, bellowing the while like a bull of Bashan. Meantime, the bedridden woman had been rescued from the Chisholm bothy, and the Gaelic curses that she put upon the retreating form of the factor were most notable, and long remembered in Kildonan.

I tarried with the homeless ones for a while, and when the flames had spent themselves, continued on my way to the Sutherland shieling. When I got well up the braeface I looked back across the Strath, and counted forty fires. The whole countryside seemed to be in flames. And weirdly, like a *coronach* (funeral dirge), there came to my ears the wailing tune of *Martyrdom,* sung by the homeless ones at blasted Badinlosgin downby:

Beannaicht' gu robh gu siòrruidh buan
Ainm glormhor uasal fein
Lionadh a ghloir gach uile thir,
Amen, agus Amen.

Mrs. Sutherland, a douce, tight woman in those days, opened the door to me.

"It's well you dropped in, Donald," said the good woman, "for I'll be going over to see Mrs. Campbell, poor body, and you'll be company for Bess, whatever."

As she wrapped her plaid about her I told her about the sacking of Badinlosgin downby, and how the heartless Sellars had ordered the roof to be burned over the head of the old Chisholm woman.

"Another township driven down to the shore," said Mrs. Sutherland sadly, "and it will soon be our turn, Donald. I dread the day. I dread it greatly, Donald, for your father and the head of this house will never go peacefully before Sellars. Blood will be spilled before your shieling and ours are burned. Well I know it. I have heard your father and my man talking together of late, and violence is in both their minds. It frightens me, Donald."

"It does not frighten me, mother!" The words, quietly but clearly spoken, came from the only child of the Sutherlands,—by common consent the fairest maiden in three parishes. "Why should their talk frighten us?" went on the girl. "If I were a man, I would fight Sellars. There would be fewer burnings if there were more men-folk like father and Donald's father in Sutherlandshire."

"Ah, well, it may be as you say, Bess," said the

mother uncertainly, "and come what may, 'tis a great consolation to know that your father takes his counsel, in this matter as in all others, from the Good Book. Has he not read much of late about the sword of the Lord and of Gideon? But I must be on my way."

To my clumsy offer to escort her to the Campbell shieling she replied: "It's desperate anxious you are to go with me, Donald, but you'd better tend the peats ben the shieling."

But her daughter Bessie, with a concern that struck me as uncommon, even in her that is so thoughtful for others, called out from the kitchen: "Let the *sgalag* (farm labourer) tend you upby, mother. The Strath is full of queer folk since the burnings started."

At her call, out of the byre at the back came the *sgalag*, rubbing his eyes stupidly, and twisting his dirty kilt about his great buttocks. Mrs. Sutherland cast a look of ill-concealed scorn at the unkempt apparition, and then turned to her daughter with snapping eyes.

"Whatever has come over you, lassie?" she exclaimed. Bessie, however, was busy over the fire, and made no reply. Her mother looked hard at me, and then, with, I could swear, a twinkle in her eye at the last, motioned her escort through the door and followed him without so much as a word.

In this way it happened that I had Bessie Sutherland all to myself by the peat fire in her father's shieling. As she knitted, we talked about the plight of our people, and I waxed hot as we recounted the sufferings of the harried crofters. Bessie Sutherland, however, took it all quietly, and her serenity, which I mistook for indifference, led me to blurt out roughly: "It's easy for you,

Bess Sutherland, to feel the way you do, but it would be a different story to you if your father owed back rent like so many others."

"You are a silly boy, Donald Stewart," she answered quickly, and the blood made pretty red splashes in her pale cheeks as she spoke. "It would make no difference to me if we were turned out like the rest,—as we will be. The folk in the Strath have starved for years. Let them have the land for their deer and sheep. We can live elsewhere. But," she added quietly, "I would never submit to a burning."

My heart gave a great stound. "But where will you go," I asked, for the thought of Bessie Sutherland leaving the Strath of Kildonan made me feel queerly empty. She looked at me for a moment or two, her eyes black as ripe sloes in the yellow light of the cruisie, and then she said, very quiet-like: "Where will we go, Donald Stewart? Where is your father going? Think you my father is less venturesome than yours? We will all be on the road to this country of Assiniboia before the hills are green again. It is in my father's mind,—morning, noon, and night."

With these words far-off Assiniboia became, in truth, a land of promise to me, for with their utterance, strange as it may appear, I knew that I loved Bessie Sutherland, who, up till that night, had been my playmate merely,—a tall, swift-footed girl ready for any adventurous ploy. Now, in some miraculous fashion, she had changed from the playmate of my boyhood into a calm and comely maiden, and now, for the first time, I felt shy and awkward in her presence. Bessie Sutherland was then coming on eighteen, and if a maid has

beauty at this age, and the beauty is tempered with the look of character that comes with sound blood, and the mellow meditative sweetness that comes into her eyes with the soft dawning of womanhood, the lad that comes knocking at her father's door is like to learn the meaning of love. I, Donald Stewart, so testify.

CHAPTER III

LEAVING THE STRATH

AFTER much corresponding between my father, James Sutherland, and the Earl of Selkirk, the day came when we were to leave the Strath of Kildonan. It had been arranged that we were to proceed by boats to Stromness, where the sea-going ships awaited us. The folk that were not of the expedition came down to the sea with us, carrying our *dorlachs* (baggage) and talking cheery. At last and long we said our farewells for the last time and took our places in the crowded boats. And standing there on the pier of Helmsdale, as our hands parted with theirs, the people started a great wailing, and a drove of forsaken sheep-dogs stretched their heads after their masters and howled most piteously. The shore fell away as the salt water lappered briskly against our boats, and above our heads the white gulls whirled in confusion and cried querulously. In the hindermost boat, Duncan MacDonald filled his bag, and

Cha till! Cha till!
Cha till, mi tuille

came from the chanter, with the wail of Skye in it, and the booming of angry seas. The wind, blowing shrewdly from the East, wafted the plaintive notes shorewards, and the old women on the pier spread

their plaids to the sky and cried *"Ochanorie"* [1] across the widening water.

"Cha till! Cha till! Cha till, mi tuille!" answered the pipes.

"Stop the cursed dirge, MacDonald, and put a reel on her," shouted Moncrief Blair, who sat fuming heather brew beside my father. But no sound of his voice reached the ears of the piper, and my father, turning swift upon Blair, cried in his ear: "Let him play. 'Tis fit music for this day." True words these, for this selfsame Blair was the only man in the company who set foot in Kildonan again; he it was who, on pretence of some business, forsook the ship at Stromness and eased his black conscience by carrying false tales concerning our leave-taking to the agents of The Northwest Company.

So we slipped away. The breeze tightened the sails and the boats shivered as they nosed the incoming tide. Yet our eyes were turned backward to the turmoil of mountains overby,—in the fastnesses of which our forefathers had oftentimes crouched in the fighting times. A white mist slipped down the face of Ben Laoghal, flowing gently out over the shielings on the rim of the Strath. My father took me by the arm and pointed to the rapidly receding scene.

"Take the long look, Donald," he said, a strange sadness in his voice. The whirring of grouse in the silent hills, the chuckling of brown streams as they leapt the mossy rocks where the gaunt firs met the bell-heather,—upon such things, I knew, my father's mind dwelt heavily on that morning long ago. And down

[1] Exclamation of grief.

there on the Helmsdale pier the dreary-sad figures stood looking out after us, shading their eyes with their hands. A staring figure would raise a corner of a plaid and wave it high, and as the thin cry of farewell came over the salt water, the women in the boats turned yearningly towards the shore, silently weeping. *Ochanorie!* Well, the folk on the shore were our own folk, with the kind hearts that are hurt at the partings. Smaller and smaller they grew, till the heave of the sea hid them from our straining eyes. The Strath and its people had faded from our sight.

In due course, and without mishap, we arrived at Stromness, where we expected to meet Lord Selkirk, who, we had been told, would lead us to Assiniboia. We learned at Stromness, however, that His Lordship had gotten word of a shortage of river boats at his Fort on Hudson Bay; on learning this, His Lordship decided to wait till the supplies at Hudson Bay were such as to enable him to proceed there at the head of a body of colonists substantial enough to stamp out such strife as might arise in his distant settlement. We were greatly cast down by the news, and to this day I firmly believe that great hardships would have been avoided had the Earl sailed with us. Be that as it may, our troubles began at Stromness. The townspeople, though friendly enough, laid heavy hands on our purses, and had not the elders of our party sternly shepherded us, I verily believe that these lively and covetous folk would have beggared us completely.

My people and the Sutherlands were lodged in the upper part of the house of Robert Menzies, provision merchant. He had a thrawn wife and a numerous fam-

ily, but my narrative has to do only with the eldest daughter, Jessie, a buxom lass of eighteen years or thereabouts. No sooner was I settled under her father's roof than she began to seek my company, plying me with questions. At first these were decorous enough, but as we became better acquainted her tongue loosened till I declare her covert questions made me blush with confusion. Yet (though the fact is not to my credit) the pretty limmer exercised a strange hypnotism over me. Red-lipped, seeking girls fared badly in the Strath of Kildonan, and at nineteen a lad's blood runs warm and heedless. So, with a strange ferment urging me to mischief, I bandied talk with Jess Menzies. I will not be denying that I avoided contact with her; it might be that, outwardly, I gave encouragement to her amorous advances. So it came about that she met me one night in the dark of the stairway, and drew me aside.

"How like you my hair?" said the vixen, leaning warmly against me. Glancing down at her mass of flaming curls, which indeed were comforting to the eyes, I answered carelessly: "It's pretty, I own." She pressed closer to me then. "Feel how soft it is, laddie," she whispered, and taking my hand boldly, she laid it upon her warm head. Then, before I could utter a word, this daughter of Circe slid her arms about my neck, and with a sigh drew my mouth down to hers. How long we stood swaying there in each other's arms I do not know, but I came to myself at the slamming of a door behind me. Disengaging myself swiftly from my eager temptress, I turned my head slowly, greatly afraid of what I might see! Surely no man that ever

transgressed got such a mortifying awakening! For when I turned my moidered head, I looked straight into the eyes of Bessie Sutherland. There she stood, one hand still on the door knob, looking first at me, and then at the wanton lass at my side. Pitying disgust was in her level gaze. Had she broken out upon me furiously, the ordeal had been less trying. But the lass I truly loved was her father's daughter. She stood poised there a brief moment,—slim and pretty. Then with a sweeping glance, half curious and half contemptuous, at the disordered lass that stood *redding* (arranging) her hair beside me, Bessie Sutherland walked quickly past me. The faint slamming of a door upstairs brought me out of the trance into which I had fallen. Anger and disgust boiled up in me, and I pushed the Menzies lass away from me roughly, whereupon the *limmer* (jade) stamped her foot and gave low-voiced utterance to a stream of most shocking ridicule and denunciation. But she did not dare to follow me as I lunged out of her father's house,—to seek composure in wandering moodily up and down the noisome streets of Stromness.

In due course the emigrants were herded into the sailing ship *Prince of Wales*. Trouble was not long a-brewing after that. First, as we rode at anchor in Cairstone Roads, a great wrangling arose between Miles Macdonell, the Earl's agent, and some of the Glasgow men who had been hired by the Hudson's Bay Company. The Glasgow men maintained, in language far from polite, that they had been contracted at higher wages than Captain Macdonell, the Earl's agent, was now prepared to pay over. The agent was

a fiery man, more given to sword-play than logical argument, and the Glasgow militants were threatened with the ship's irons. This threat silenced the Glasgow men. Ere this harangue terminated, the Collector of Customs came aboard, and after stamping pompously about the crowded deck, and prying into the dark corners of the ship's hold, he accosted Miles Macdonell with the ill-mannered question:

"Are you the man in charge of this *spreidh*" (drove of cattle)?

The Earl's agent looked down, and let his eyes travel slowly from the official's feet to his braided cap. It was a scrutiny heavy with insult, and the Collector went ruddy with rage.

"You were speaking, little one?" drawled the agent at last.

"Try none of your papish tricks on me," spluttered the outraged official. "I'm here on His Majesty's business, and I'll hold this ship here till I'm spoken to civilly. I've heard about you, Captain Macdonell. There's men . . ."

"Be quate, man," interrupted the agent. "You'll be bursting a blood vessel,—and that would be very bad for your pretty clothes, whatever."

"I'll take the twist out of your tongue, Irisher, before I'm through with you and your ship," cried the Collector. "This ship is overloaded, and I'll see to it that you don't sail till I've combed your cargo for you. A fine business is this anyway,—carrying people to the North Pole! A disgrace to the realm. Let me tell you, Sir,"—he raised his angry voice so that it carried the length of the ship,—"that neither you nor the Earl

of Selkirk,—he's little better than a Galloway bonnet laird anyway,—can carry these misguided folk away if they are minded to leave the ship. They can go ashore, and stay there, in spite of you, and you can do nothing except by an action at law for breach of contract. That's the law, sir, and these people ought to know it."

"Away with you, little man," said the agent. "You have been smelling about this ship long enough."

"Are you ordering me ashore?" stormed the Collector.

"That same!" retorted the agent, and he took his hands out of his pockets.

"You have gone too far this time," shouted the official. "I'll have you know that my office . . ."

"I ken all about your office," roared the agent. "You came by it through your wife.[1] But for her you'd be gutting fish on the shore."

The Collector stood speechless for a moment, then hissed out: "This passes all endurance. Nothing but blood will settle our score now. If there is a spark of manhood in you, be on the shore yonder at seven o'clock to-night, and bring a pistol."

"I am no Frenchman," replied the agent warmly. "Highland gentlemen fight with the steel. But there will be no fight on the shore to-night, for I would not be smearing my dirk with your tallow. Put to shore, spitfire, or I will be throwing you over the bulwarks."

Catching the glint in the agent's eye, the Collector

[1] The Collector, Reid by name, was related by marriage to Sir Alexander MacKenzie, who, being mighty in the Councils of the Northwest Company in 1812, had turned his powerful hand against Lord Selkirk.—J. H. McC.

of Customs checked his tongue, and raking the agent with a deadly glance, turned and strode wrathfully towards his dingy. No sooner was he free of the ship than he stood up in a purple rage and shouted: "You will rue this day's doings, you black-browed Papist! You and your Galloway laird have run your last cargo out of this port!"

The agent, flushing angrily, spoke sharply to a swart sailor who appeared at his elbow. Instantly the sailor rose on his toes, and the next moment the Collector yelped with fright as a ten-pound shot fractured the bottom of his dingy.

"Haste ye," jeered the Agent, "or it's yourself that will never leave this port."

The Collector threw a wild look at the water that swished at his feet, and with a frantic look shorewards, took to bailing. Then he jumped to the oars and nearly went head over heels in a desperate attempt to send his leaking dingy shorewards. Then he was throng at the bailing again. A more ludicrous spectacle could scarce be imagined, and when the discomfited official at length reached the shore, he was loudly cheered from the bulwarks of *The Prince of Wales*. For a moment he stood gazing at us, then, shaking his fists at us in a paroxysm of impotent rage, he disappeared.

He had not shot his last bolt, however. Two hours had not gone by before his son-in-law, one Captain MacKenzie, came aboard at the head of a recruiting party. This visit of MacKenzie's gave rise to a very melancholy incident. Going among the colonists on his rough canvass, he suddenly shouted triumphantly at sight of a fine strapping lad who stood talking to his

sweetheart,—a tall golden-haired lass from Caithness. The bold and callous soldier confronted the lad, who had gone pale.

"What might your name be, young fellow?" he demanded.

"Ian MacDougal," answered the lad slowly.

The soldier laughed loudly.

"I recall it as well as your face, my fine fellow," he cried. "You'll not be forgetting the day you took the King's shilling at Caithness?"

To this accusation the lad made no reply, but the girl at his side suddenly flung her arms about him and cried out: "You cannot have him. You cannot take him away. We are to be wed when we reach the Land of Promise. Let him be."

To the poor girl's despairing cries, however, the ruthless soldier paid no heed. Laying rough hands on the young man's shoulder, he called his men and declared him under arrest. A struggle ensued, but the prisoner was soon overpowered, and followed by the distracted girl, the party clambered into their boat and rowed boisterously away. This foul act, for foul act it surely was, was but the chance outcome of the many blows aimed at us by the agents of the Northwest Company as *The Prince of Wales* lay at anchor in Cairstone Roads. The very obliqueness of these assaults denoted the sinister and far-reaching power of the iron men of Montreal; even then their hounds were baying at Lord Selkirk's heels.

The agent sensed the depth of the conspiracy that unfolded about us, and long since conscious of the unsettled state of the colonists, he made rapid prepara-

tions for sailing, and in the afternoon we put out to sea. Yet trouble went with us, for as we went creaking out of Hoy Sound, with all sails set from royals down, one of the Glasgow malcontents jumped overboard in his boots and began swimming determinedly for the receding shore. This lunatical act occasioned great excitement, but the harassed agent, after observing the swimmer for some time, turned from the bulwarks with a relieved smile and walked aft humming:

Aora, my heart, I am sailing, sailing,
Far to the North in the slope of the sea;
Aora, mo chridhe, it is cold in the far land,
Bitter the stranger with wands on his doorway,
Aora Mochree!

CHAPTER IV

THE OUTBREAK OF THE SHIP'S FEVER

TO a five-knot wind the ship soon left the shores of Scotland behind. Presently the sloop-of-war that convoyed us to the open sea wheeled in her course. Guns roared, and were answered, and soon we were alone on the face of the waters. For my part, I found relief, and a certain measure of elation, in our isolation. At least I was among ancient friends, and the very uncertainty of the future quickened my pulses.

We Kildonan emigrants were quartered near the bow of the boat. The quarters were dark, chilly, and far from commodious, but we made fair to be comfortable. Of privacy there was little, but the grim elders of our contingent speedily overcame this defect of our quarters by making curtains out of plaids, so that we could, in comfort and proper decency, use our kilts for pillows. The worst of our troubles on the first night was the gushing of the water past our heads. Our quarters were well below the sea level, and the water, rushing against the ship's timbers, filled the hold with watery sounds that made my flesh creep as I lay half-awake in the inky darkness. Indeed, but few of the emigrants slept that first night aboard *The Prince of Wales,* for each surge and lurch of the little ship was accompanied by such a swirling rush of waters that we

jumped up, half expecting to see the sides of the boat burst in like wet paper. But this nervousness soon passed.

With Bessie Sutherland, who gave not the least sign of harbouring any remembrance of our encounter in the Menzies' house, I spent many a happy hour exploring the ship. *The Prince of Wales* was about 500 tons burden, and sat well in the water. Her bows were iron-plated, and her water lines sheathed with oak to enable her to battle her way through the ice. She had a top-gallant forecastle forward, and a raised poop aft. In the half-deck fronting the poop were several berths; in these Captain Macdonell and the ship's officers were quartered. Our favourite rendezvous was the tiny room where Captain Turner kept his ship's compass and books of ocean navigation. Bessie had the right side of the cantankerous old sailor from the first, but for me he had little stomach. He liked well to show us how his course was held to the compass, the while boasting of his seamanship in a most affronting manner.

"I can keep her nose to the course," he would say, "with the corner of my eye on the compass and a word across my shoulder."

"But what if the compass got broken?" asked Bessie one day when the conceitful old sailor talked thus.

"If the compass broke, my lassie," he replied, "I could steer by the stars and never miss a step between the Old Man of Hoy and Ten Fathom Hole. If there were no stars, you say! Hut! Little difference that would make to me. I'd shorten sail a bit, maybe, but I'd hold a true course by the feel of the air. I takes my

ship out, and I brings my ship in,—fair weather or foul."

Thus ranted the man who put us ashore at Sloop's Cove. That stroke of seamanship cost him his command of *The Prince of Wales*, for he ran her aground within sight of Fort Churchill; there are people hereabouts who say, also, that it proved that the heart of a true man did not beat in Captain Turner's breast. But of that more anon.

For three days, with fair winds, we slipped along. On the fourth day out we encountered turbulent seas,—the fearful cross-swells off the coast of Greenland. The wind fell. The sails no longer steadied the ship, so that she wallowed drunkenly, at times dipping her yardarms. Long before sunset the emigrants were prostrated with seasickness. For three days the ship wallowed, but on the fourth morning the sails were tight again, and with the steadying of the vessel the seasick passengers sought the fresh air once more.

My father was long in coming round. At the end of another week he was still unable to raise his head from his pillow, though the vomiting spells no longer racked him. He complained of pains in his head, and seemed to be burning as with a fever. Becoming anxious at last, my mother called in the ship's doctor. I mind he came whistling to my father's bedside,—a hearty, ruddy-faced man by the name of Laserre. He put his hand on my father's brow, and felt his pulse. " 'Tis upset you are," he said, after looking at his timepiece closely. "Let me look at your tongue." At the sight of it he gave a start. "Keep him well covered," he said briskly to my mother, "and I'll bring him some-

thing to cool his blood." In a few minutes he was back again with a glass of medicine in his hand,—and Captain Turner, looking uncommonly anxious, at his heels. While my father raised his head to drink the medicine, the Doctor and Captain Turner exchanged meaning looks, and proceeded aloft. As the Doctor reached the stairway, he suddenly turned on his heel and called my mother to him. He spoke to her in a low voice, so that I could not hear his words, but his face was grave, and my mother put her hand to her throat suddenly, as if stricken. Then she came to me, and I saw that the fresh colour had left her cheeks.

"Take your gear on deck, Donald," she said, her voice little better than a whisper. "Your father is down with the ship's fever!"

At my look of horror, she put a finger on her lip, and glanced meaningly in the direction of my father. So I held my tongue, and with fear chill about my heart,—which is ever the way of healthy folk in the presence of disease, I gathered up my gear while my mother delivered her dread message to the other occupants of the hold. Soon my father was alone,—except for my mother.

Next day the surgeon bled my father, but as a consequence he grew pitifully weak. Five days later, at the mouth of the morning of June 28th, my mother shook me to wakefulness. My teeth chattering in my head, I followed her to my father's bed of pain. James Sutherland was already there, and to him my father was speaking.

"My time has come," he said calmly. "I am done. The Land of Promise is not for Ewen Stewart."

"Do not talk of dying, father," I cried. "You will be feeling better in the morning."

But my father shook his head, and smiled at me in the kind way he had.

"No, *'Ille* (Son)," he answered, "I will soon be travelling. Stem your tears, Donald. There are things I must speak about, and the time is short."

And by and by, as his poor wasted hand stroked my head, my sobbing ceased, and a strange calmness descended upon my spirit. Yet I knew that my father, whom I loved greatly, was at the dying. Calmly, as though talking by our peat-fire at home, he counselled me as his life ebbed away.

"You'll take care of your mother, Donald. We have put our hands to the plough, and there's no turning back now. Make the best of things, son, and the road will come easier to your feet. Ken your place, but hold your head high. And keep good your given word, Donald. Keep . . . good . . . your . . . given . . . word." His voice trailed away to a whisper, and he lay silent for a while, as if exhausted. My mother slipped her hand under his head, and raising it up gently till it was pillowed on her breast, wiped his lips with a cloth moistened in cool water. After a while he spoke again, this time to my mother.

"You'll be minding about the property at Inverness, Margaret. Angus Montgomery will put everything in order. You'd better send him word back by the boat before you start for Red River. 'Twill do no harm to see the new country, whatever, and if you care not for it there's aye a road back to Kildonan, and something among your hands when you get there."

"Never fear about me, Ewen," said my mother bravely, the tears running fast down her cheeks.

There was silence for a while, broken only by my mother's soft sobbing. Then my father opened his eyes, and stretched his hands out to us. "I'm about to go," he murmured. "The pain has left my head. I can hear the music of the *clarsach* (harp) when I close my eyes. Well, I'm ready to go without fuss or fear. It is the Lord's will, and His will be done."

He raised himself up suddenly on his wasted arm, and staring beyond us, cried: "I see a fair land where you prosper. I see cosy ingle nooks and rosy-cheeked bairns playing their games under the trees. I see a kirk, standing by a river. I see . . . Where are ye, *mo chridhe* (my sweetheart)!"

With a cry of vast yearning, my mother put her arms about my father, and gently lowered him to his pillow. And then, through my own tears, I saw that my mother no longer wept. Her face had gone deathly pale, but it was now strangely serene, and I marvelled greatly to see how calmly she closed my father's eyes and composed his hair.

"Yon was the man," said James Sutherland gravely, passing a hand across his forehead as if dazed. "I mind the day he came to Kildonan. It was at the lambing time in 1784. We were friends from the first. Yon was . . . Yon was . . ." The catechist dropped suddenly to his knees, his body rent by sobs.

Thus died my father, Ewen Stewart of Appin. In life he was stern, and brief of speech. Thoughtless people said he was a hard and stubborn man. Yet there was no man in the Strath of Kildonan who lacked in

respect for Ewen Stewart, for he was a man of courage and determination, a dispassionate adviser, and, though his granite-like exterior concealed the fact from careless eyes,—a man of uncommon gentleness and kindliness.

In less than a week the dreaded fever had swept the little ship. Hugh MacDonald died painfully in the night. The wasted bodies of Catherine, daughter of Donald Gunn of Borobal, and William Sutherland, a young man of great promise, were consigned to the grey waters two days later. The crew was soon reduced, and for days on end the helm was lashed. No words of mine can fittingly describe the misery of those dreadful days. At times the ship drifted,—a crewless hulk. In the midst of this horror, the surgeon suddenly expired; his passing almost unhinged the mind of Captain Turner. The sick could not be isolated, accommodation being limited. Moreover, the fever had swept through all parts of the ship so suddenly on the heels of my father's death that it was manifestly futile to think of segregation after most of those aboard were lying on their backs in the throes of the plague. So the sick lay moaning among the healthy in every part of the ship, and every day, usually in the gloom of the early morning hours, the bedding would be turned back from a poor cold body from which the life had flown during the night.

Yet there were hearts that beat undaunted in the midst of that gruesome drama enacted on *The Prince of Wales*. Ere the full force of the disease had been felt, those who were still immune had organized themselves into a nursing force. The older women folks

were accustomed to sickness. Also, being of the Highlands, they were accustomed to the ceremonious finalities of sickness, and they attended to those of us who were stricken with a grim garrulity that left little to our fevered imaginations. If I live to be a hundred, I will not forget the ministrations of old Elizabeth Sutherland of Auchraich, specially the time that the stout-hearted old dame gave me a draught of medicine.

"Drink it down, laddie," said she, putting the medicine to my lips. Moaning, and twisting my head from side to side, for in truth I was in misery, I made little effort to comply. "Come now, Donald," said my aged nurse testily. "Drink the medicine, and be thankful ye can get it, whatever," and without more ado she took my nose between her finger and thumb, and holding my head firmly against her knee, poured the bitter stuff down my throat. While I spluttered and gasped and moaned, she calmly proceeded to discuss my condition.

"You're at the worst, laddie, but you're young, and that's in your favour. The Sutherland lassie,—that makes ye cock your ears, I see,—was as near death's door as you are this minute, but she's sitting up this morning braiding her bonny hair."

I stopped my moaning. The old lady tucked the blankets more snugly about my feet, feeling them with bony hands. "Keep your feet warm, whatever you do," she admonished me. "The hand of death will be laid on your feet first." With a deep sigh the old lady left me, and I declare that the very morbidity of her counsel cooled my fevered blood. Certain it is that my head instantly became clearer, and from that time on I came to myself steadily, which is testimony to the fact,

well known to medical men, that bedside sympathy is poor medicine for any kind of sickness. At the end of three weeks, which found me once more on deck, the disease had lost its earlier virulence; in a manner of speaking it had spent itself.

CHAPTER V

THROUGH THE ICE-FIELDS

DURING the days of our deliverance and convalescence our sturdy little ship was heading into ice. At first small pieces, no bigger than the top of a table, went drifting past, but as the days passed these detached masses became more numerous and much larger. They struck the ship alarming blows, so that none but the most seasoned sailors could sleep. These masses of ice were of a green or azure colour, and they seemed to move swiftly, as if borne on a current. Across the horizon a strange, lucid streak appeared; this phenomenon Captain Turner described as the ice-blink, and it was caused, he asserted, by the reflection of light rays upon the ice. At this time, according to my diary book, we were in N. lat. 61° 40′, W. long. 65°. The crow's nest was hoisted to the mainmast head in anticipation of heavier ice, and a temporary bridge was rigged up athwart ship, near the mainmast. This temporary bridge projected over the bulwarks so as to enable the officer of the watch to con the vessel through the floes. At this time I was making copious entries in my diary book, and the following excerpt sheds its own light:

On deck to-day with B. S. The fever has greatly weakened me; the least exertion takes my breath away and sets

my heart pounding. No deaths last night. Nineteen still down with fever, but all on the mend. Sighted Resolution Island this afternoon.

A more despondent area than Resolution Island,—snow-covered and destitute of trees,—could scarce be imagined. Yet this lonely place, hoarsely defying the waves that forever assaulted its dark grey rock masses, was a most heartening sight to us. We were now on the north side of the entrance to Hudson Bay,—on the last and most critical lap of our voyage. Islands of ice appeared on every hand, and the Captain put an extra man in the bow to watch for dangerous icebergs. Sail was taken in, for as we headed into the heavy ice a six-knot wind sprang up.

Several uneventful days passed as our ship, sailing briskly, penetrated the floes. Then the wind turned capricious, and after a day of most unsatisfactory sailing, we lay to against a vast plateau of unbroken ice. Next morning we found ourselves becalmed among uneasy ice. Along towards noon a stately mountain of ice came into view, and our curiosity quickly turned to consternation and alarm as the towering mass bore down upon us with astonishing swiftness. Shouting like a maniac, Captain Turner struggled with the crew in an effort to get the ship about. The vessel, however, had missed stays, and there was no getting her about. Meanwhile, the glistening mountain kept coming nearer, and what with the sight of it, the rumbling of cordage, and the frenzied shouting of the impotent sailors, we were numb with terror. But when the base of the ice-mountain was no more than ten yards distant a light breeze sprang up, the sails filled smartly, and

The Prince of Wales turned nimbly aside to safety. This adventure marked the beginning of our meanderings among the ice-fields. Bergs appeared now daily,—mute, massive, and menacing. Yet these threatening mountains were beautiful, especially when viewed by the light of the moon. Some of them resembled ancient abbeys, being fashioned with arched doors and windows, and all the intricate embroidery of Gothic architecture. Others were like Grecian temples, being supported by massive round columns of an azure hue that resembled, at a distance, polished granite. Captain Turner told me that many of these stupendous masses are the creations of ages, annually receiving added height by the falling of snows and rains, which congeal into fantastic designs. The spray of the ocean, forever dashing against them, freezes into an infinite variety of forms, adding to their beauty. At the close of the evening, when the level beams of the descending sun fell upon the countless apertures of these imaginary palaces and abbeys, the effect was inconceivably grand. In one place they would quiver with a light purple tint; in another, they would be touched with a rich golden colour, and in others, again, a rich crimson suffused their beautiful surfaces. But I liked best to see them by moonlight, when the whole effect was heavenly. Above all was the canopy of heaven, clear and sparkling, from which the moon poured her full tide of effulgence on the stupendous scene below,—a world studded with glittering ice-islands, whose clustering peaks seemed to penetrate airy clouds.

Yet danger lurked amidst this solemn beauty. Fogs were frequent, and while they prevailed we tacked

about slowly or lay to, in constant dread of crashing into a mountain of ice. The ship had suffered, too, from her stubborn battle with the floes. Indeed, so much copper had been torn from her bottom that she had sprung several leaks, and these were serious enough to necessitate the constant use of the pumps. Our position was made the more dangerous, too, by the difficulty which Captain Turner met with in making observations, the compass varying to such an extraordinary extent that no dependence could be placed on its erratic indications. This variation of the instrument, which I witnessed with my own eyes, is well known to Hudson Bay navigators, and is attributed to the influence of an enormous mass of metallic matter contained in the bowels of the earth.

We were now well into the Straits of Hudson Bay. Unbroken fields of ice, extending as far as the eye could reach, hemmed us in. It seemed impossible that the gallant little ship could much longer make headway, but the keen-eyed sailors, ever on the lookout, always found a channel, or, as they termed it, "a vein of water." Through these slender channels, scarce visible to casual eyes, *The Prince of Wales* slowly moved, the ice grinding all around her like complicated machinery.

Occasionally the ship was anchored to convenient bergs by the simple process of hooking an ice-anchor (a contrivance shaped like the letter S) into a hole in the berg. To be anchored in this manner, however, was not altogether safe, for sometimes a piece of the berg would suddenly break away, the terrific disruption endangering the ship that lay below. We had proof of

this one morning. We were preparing to part company with an iceberg to which we had been anchored overnight, and a jolly-boat, manned by sailors and emigrants, set out to release the ice-anchor. This berg shelved out over the water, and instead of keeping wide of the overhanging projection, the oarsmen, being in haste, rowed under it. With a violent report a part of the overhanging cliff of ice gave way, and in the twinkling of an eye we were immersed in a yawning gulf. There was a moment of fearful suspense as the black foaming water sucked us down, but the buoyant little jolly-boat held its own in the caldron, and shot upwards to safety.

The ice-fields through which our ship now laboured had their uses. For one thing, they enabled us to stretch our legs, and for days on end we who were convalescent wandered about in the vicinity of the ship. While wandering thus, somebody came across a shallow pool of water, clear as crystal and quite free from saltiness. Swimming about in this strange oasis were small fish, which the sailors called miller's-thumbs. Upon learning of the proximity of this fresh water, Captain Turner immediately emptied the ship's tanks and refilled them with the cool fresh water from the ice. So, for the first time in many days, we drank heartily of water without fear, for beyond doubt the ship's fever, from the clutches of which we had not yet won clear, was caused by the dank water that *The Prince of Wales* had carried from Ireland.

It was now the 23rd of July, and we were battling with the ice day and night. But every new day saw us nearer our objective, and on the 29th of the month

we again sighted land. There is a note of the fact in my diary book, with the situation of the ship set down as N. lat. 62° 25′, W. long. 70′. I mind, with a strange clearness, taking that reading from Captain Turner, and I mind, too, how he boasted anew of his seamanship as he let Bessie, and then me, look through his telescope at the vast, lofty perpendicular rock that rose, like a cone, in an easy ascent from the sea. This was the Island of God's Mercies, sometimes called Upper Savage Island. At sight of this bleak Gibraltar of the Arctics, the crew became vivacious, singing at their work and constantly watching the horizon. Their excitement soon infected the weary passengers, and Captain Macdonell, who was just recovering from a mild attack of the fever, bade the pipers fill their bags. So strange sounds reached the forbidding shores of the Island of God's Mercies that morning, and the sick folk below deck threw off their melancholy. At ten o'clock the following morning—August 1st—a new coast-line appeared about ten leagues distant. A barren coast it was, but we knew it for the coast-line of North America, and so beheld it with mingled feelings. As we neared it, smoke began to curl upwards from a score of fires—the signal that the natives of the country were waiting to visit us. So we stood at the bulwarks, staring intently at the approaching shore, or went below to describe the heartening scene to the fever victims, to whom the news was as potent medicine.

Soon we could see the Esquimau Indians approaching the vessel across the ice. They were heavily laden with their canoes and articles for traffic. As they came

within speaking distance, these curious aborigines cried "Chimo" repeatedly,—their habitual expression of the desire for friendly barter. Presently they were aboard, carrying whalebone, bags of blubber, rich-looking furs, toy models, dresses, and other articles, and with the greatest alacrity and keenness they set about the exchanging of their wares for such trifles as glass beads, broken knives, and buttons. These strange folk were short in stature, but broadly built. Their copper-coloured faces were uncommonly broad, and set off with high cheek-bones, and their small black eyes looked out from under lids that hung heavy with fat. I could not but remark how neatly these diminutive people were dressed. The outer garment, made of the skins of deer and seal, resembled a carrier's smock, and was sewn up in front to the chin. To the top of this garment a hood was fastened with a running string in it, which permitted the wearer to tighten the hood about his face when necessary. Under this outer garment was a shirt made of seals' bladders. The men wore sealskin breeches, which were gathered at the top like a moleskin purse. Their boots were soled with the skin of the sea-horse.

The women wore boots that came to their hips; the tops of these boots were of an extraordinary width, and were held out by a strong bow of whalebone. Into these capacious boot-tops the children were dropped while the mothers of them bartered with us,—a performance carried out with such casualness that it amused us greatly.

If disappointed in their trading, these artless people became enraged. One stocky fellow, angered at Mac-

Callum Mhor, grasped his long paddle and aimed a terrific blow at the strong man of our party. MacCallum, however, took the blow on his forearm, and black in the face with rage, gave the native such a clout on the head that he dropped to the deck like a sack of meal. Thereupon the Esquimau women started to cry *"Twa wi! twa wi!"* the while pointing angrily at us. At this juncture we were ordered by Miles Macdonell to cease mingling with the now unsettled savages, and his order being heeded, harmony was soon restored.

"Now I'll show you a trick you never saw in Kildonan," cried Captain Turner, and dangling a battered kettle against the bulwarks, he spoke to an Esquimau who sat in his canoe in the strip of open water surrounding the ship. The native, smiling broadly, set about his trick, which in truth was unbelievably dexterous, and well worth a passing word. But first I must say a word or two about his canoe. It was probably twenty feet long, and not more than two feet across at its widest part. The framework was of wood and whalebone, and this was neatly covered with sealskin parchment, except for an aperture just big enough to encircle the body of the occupant. The Esquimau sat in this aperture up to his waist, with his feet stretched forward. Round this, the only opening in the canoe, was a flat hoop, two inches high, and to it was attached a skin, with a running string in it. The Esquimau seated himself, drew this string tightly about his waist, then drew his hood snugly about his face. This done, he inclined his body to the water, and instantly dipped down. The canoe floated on the icy

water, bottom up! Its occupant was suspended, head down, underneath. For several seconds the savage and his canoe remained in this position,—in perfect congruity. Then, with a smile on his wet face, and apparently dry, the Esquimau bobbed up and assumed his natural position. In truth, no such trick was ever performed in Sutherlandshire!

We left these queer people behind, and continued our voyage into the Strait, being anxious to reach York Factory, for the fever still lingered with us. On the 12th of August we made the North end of Mansell's Island,—lat. 62°, 38½′, long. 80°, 33′. The ice no longer impeded our progress, and for several days, under topgallant sails, we scudded along before a five-knot wind. There is nothing in my diary book that fastens my mind on this tedious period of our voyage. In one of my entries there is a brief reference to the attempt made by Captain Macdonell to instruct the able-bodied emigrants in the intricacies of military drills. The Captain was a born soldier, and as such, regarded the drilling of his subordinates as his prerogative. Unfortunately for the Captain's peace of mind and martial ambitions, however, he was obliged to deal with stubborn, unbiddable men on *The Prince of Wales*, and the upshot of his drilling was ill-feeling,—terminating finally in the abrupt abandonment of the senseless gyrations that he liked so well to order and direct.

On the 21st of August we got well into Hudson Bay, and no more ice was encountered after that. But here, on the very last lap of our voyage, we encountered a terrific storm. It came up suddenly,—an orgy of wind, sleet, and rain. The little ship was soon staggering be-

fore the savage gale, and every fresh blast threatened to dismast her. The skipper soon had the reeling vessel snug under close-reefed topsails and the foretopmast staysail, but even so we were in grave danger of being driven headlong on a lee-shore, for the horizon was covered with huge foaming billows, and the violence of the elements made complete control of the ship impossible. Yet I could not but admire the activities of Captain Turner during this appalling storm; whatever his faults (and he was not without grievous ones, as I shall presently show) he was an able seaman. In the midst of the storm he flew on sure feet from one part of the ship to another, shouting orders in a voice that rose above the uproar of the elements, and cursing the awkward members of his crew with strange, full-flavoured sea oaths. Down in the hold, in the midst of this turmoil and danger, Mrs. McClain was seized with labour pains, and her groans, mingling with the howling of the wind among the rigging, and the awful sounds of the desperate pumps, made us put our fingers in our ears. For three days the storm raged, the ship drifting drunkenly among the dangerous shoals peculiar to Hudson Bay. But at last and long, in no more than ten fathoms of water, two anchors were fearfully cast. Fortunately, they held, and so the storm was weathered out in comparative safety. So, in a sea yet angry, but under a clear sky, we looked towards the West on the morning of August 29th and glimpsed, with avid eyes, the gateway to the Land of Promise!

CHAPTER VI

THE LANDING AT FORT CHURCHILL

THE mouth of a powerful, mud-carrying river lay fair in the ship's path, and there was a stir of gladsome excitement as Miles Macdonell, a telescope in his hands, came running forward to where the peering emigrants crowded at the bulwarks. Training his glass on the still obscure shore-line, the agent gave utterance to the one word,—"Churchill!" and turned to face the scowling ship's master.

"I'd swear by the soul of my grandfather that you're sticking the ship's nose up the Churchill River, Captain Turner," exclaimed the Earl's man, his voice sharp with suspicion. "Yon's Cape Merry on the left, where the Indians were drowned two years ago,—and if that's not Esquimaux Point over to the right yonder, I've never laid eyes on it. I can see the ruins of Fort Prince of Wales as plainly as I see the nose on your face."

"'Tis Churchill River, sure enough, Captain Macdonell," replied the ship's captain in a surely and combative tone.

"And might I be asking what this ship's doing in this part of the Bay?" queried the agent, his eyes narrowing. "My instructions were to put the colonists ashore at York Factory, and well you know it. The Earl never so much as mentioned the name of Fort Churchill."

"Nor did he mention that this ship would be rotten with fever," retorted Captain Turner, showing the whites of his eyes unpleasantly. "Here I am, with my ship half manned and ice forming in the Bay. Hearken to the pumps! I'm for Glasgow, if my timbers will hold together. All I can do is put you ashore at Churchill."

"You cannot do this thing," cried the Earl's agent. "Half the colonists are lying on their backs, as you see. The place for them is York, where they can get roofs over their heads and sound victuals in their bellies."

"They can do as well here, Captain Macdonell, and well you know it," retorted the Master of *The Prince of Wales* stubbornly. "I tell you there's bad sailing between here and Fort York, and I'll not take a leaky ship down the coast at this season of the year. 'Tis too much to ask of any sailor. My ship comes first, Captain Macdonell. I stand by that. I take my ship out and I bring my ship home, and that's the first task of a sailor."

Miles Macdonell pondered the edict a moment or two, biting his lips and breathing hard through his nose.

"This is a notable mess you have landed us into, Captain Turner," he said at last, "and I hope you're made to smart for your inhuman stubbornness. But I know where my authority begins,—and ends. The ship is in your hands and, God willing, it must sail according to your bidding. No man can gainsay that, and it's not me that would be trying. I know my place, and my place is with the colonists, come what may. Throw us on the rocks overby, and what I can do will be done.

But I tell you, sir, it's murder, and the Earl of Selkirk will have something to say about it in good time."

The master of *The Prince of Wales* made no reply, and walked away, his hands clasped behind his back. His final argument came home to us as *The Prince of Wales,* under his savage orderings, headed definitely for Fort Churchill. Presently the ship was in the muddy current of the Churchill River,—between Cape Merry and Esquimaux Point. Here the river was narrow, and surely of great depth,—for further inland we could see where it widened out into a great harbour. On Esquimaux Point, no more than forty yards from the river bank, stood the bastioned ruins of Fort Prince of Wales, erected in the year 1733, and as I gazed at its massive rampart, I could not but ruminate soberly upon the notable daring and enterprise of the men who had planted the stately flag of the Company in this desolate spot. Slowly we sailed past these speaking ruins, and so into the expansion of the river. Here, well out from shore, we came to anchor, and Captain Turner and the agent went ashore in a jolly-boat and proceeded to the new Fort. In less than an hour they returned to the ship.

Once aboard, Miles Macdonell came over to where we emigrants stood,—for all of us that were able to move were on deck, eager to taste the land air in our nostrils, and gazing longingly at the substantial buildings of Fort Churchill. Looking worried about the eyes, the Earl's man announced that we would leave the ship without delay. Whereat, every man that could walk brought his gear on deck, and this done, the sick were carried on deck. Meantime the anchors were

weighed and canvas set to the wind, and presently the ship, tacking prettily, slid in to the appointed landing place,—near to the mouth of Sloop's Cove. The able-bodied were soon stretching their legs on the rocks, and at last and long the feeble and the helpless ones were sitting or lying among the jumble of gear that was scattered over the great flat rocks of Sloop's Cove.

No sooner was the last fever victim ashore, however, than the anchors were once more weighed, and before our amazed eyes *The Prince of Wales* drifted rapidly away. True enough, we on the rocks were right glad to be parted with the ship, but pestiferous prison though it was, it was yet the sole remaining link with Scotland, and we had thought to part with it with leisurely decorum. But in ten minutes *The Prince of Wales* was well down the Churchill, scudding seaward as if glad to be rid of its troublesome cargo.

James Sutherland sought out Miles Macdonell. "'Twould have been better, Captain Macdonell," said the catechist civilly, "if the ship had discharged us nearer the Fort overby."

The agent gave a wild, mirthless laugh, and stood staring after the departing ship.

"*Mallachd ort* (curses on thee)!" he cried, shaking his clenched fist at the fast-disappearing ship. "May the bottom drop out of your foul tub. Coward and cheat. *Mallachd ort!*"

He turned quickly to face the wondering catechist, and there was a wild look in his eye.

"Can it be that you have not guessed the truth yet, Sutherland?" he cried. "There is no accommodation for us over-by, and little enough food. We cannot ex-

pose the Fort people to this plague that is still with us. That would be madness. Here we must stay till we can build roofs over our heads, and may God help us."

The agent's words reached the ears of the waiting colonists, and men came crowding about him, all asking the same question.

"It's as I say, men," cried the agent unsteadily, and noting the dreadful effect of his words he took command of himself and called the elders of our party aside for a consultation. Presently they joined us again, and with a show of cheerfulness set us to the preparation of a camp.

It were better for me, I am thinking, to pass lightly over the tragedy that was enacted on the rocks of Sloop's Cove. It comes back to my mind like a foul dream of the night,—a deeply buried memory that I am not minded to stir. Despite the forced cheerfulness of Miles Macdonell and the leaders of the colonists upon whom he leaned so heavily in the first black hours of our isolation, we were soon disillusioned. We were not able to procure enough tents, and the numerous sick lay on the bare rocks, chilled to the marrow by the cold, searching winds that came over the bleak marshes. The convalescent were so feeble and emaciated that they were scarce able to attend to their own needs.

Our food consisted of erratic supplies of oatmeal, dried partridges, and peas that were infested with worms. So, what with the lack of warming food, and exposure to the bitter night winds, many of the able-bodied men and women fell victims to a recrudescence of the fever. Death laid siege to the miserable en-

campment, and such was the extremity of our sufferings that strong men and brave women broke under the strain, and prayed for the miracle that ends all earthly troubles.

I, Donald Stewart, saw and heard these things. And something else, too, I saw. I have a vision of a maid going about among the sufferers, indefatigable and unafraid. There are old men hereabouts who say that a strange light played about her head as she moved among the sick at night. I saw nothing of that, but I testify to the spirit of Bessie Sutherland, which was of a quality transcending all that is human. Not until the fever and suffering had abated did her spirit falter. She swooned away then, and for a night and a day lay as one dead. Then, to the great relief of all, she came out of her trance, smiling and refreshed as if waking from a deep sleep. Whereupon our leaders devoted themselves to the pressing problem of providing us with proper winter quarters, for now the autumn was well advanced, and the air had a wintry tang in it, especially after sundown. Clearly we could not stay on the sterile rocks of Sloop's Cove, nor anywhere in the environs of Fort Churchill, for the country thereabouts was barren and exposed. It was finally decided that we should move to where the primeval forest met the destitute gravel ridges of the coast, a journey of fifteen miles across the muskeg.

Three of the most vigorous men of our party, MacCallum Mhor, Angus MacKay, and John Bruce, were sent ahead to locate a site for the winter camp. The remainder gathered up their gear, and led by Miles Macdonell, set out across the muskeg. That

was the last I saw of Sloop's Cove, and I am not wishful to set eyes on it again. Yet is there hallowed ground there, marked at the time by a rude slab of wood, on which was the following inscription:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF

John Sutherland, of Kildonan, died here 2nd September, 1813, aged 50 yrs.

also

Christine Gunn, of Kildonan, died here 20th September, 1813, aged 50 yrs.

also

Donald Bannerman, of Kildonan, died here 24th September, 1813, aged 50 yrs.

also

George McDonald, of Borobal, died here 1st September, 1813, aged 48 yrs.

also

Betsy Sutherland, of Auchraich, died here 26th September, 1813, aged 18 yrs.

also

Christian Bannerman, of Kildonan, died here 30th August, 1813, aged 17 yrs.

also

John Bannerman, of Kildonan, died here 3rd September, 1813, aged 19 yrs.

also

Ewen Stewart, of Appin, aged 54 yrs.; Hugh McDonald, of Inverness, aged 27 yrs.; William Sutherland, of Kildonan, aged 19 yrs.; Catherine Gunn, of Borobal, aged 20 yrs. (who died at sea).

CHAPTER VII

LOST IN THE MUSKEG

FROM the rocks of Sloop's Cove we stepped abruptly into a marshy wilderness. The boulders became smaller and scarcer as we moved forward, and the deepening growth of marsh plants gave one the sensation of moving forward into a depression. The gravel ridges disappeared, to be succeeded by straggling patches of tall reeds that merged in the distance ahead of us into an unbroken, dun-coloured forest. As we approached this waving jungle, the ground became peaty and moist, black oily water oozing up to fill our footprints.

Our course was diagonal from Sloop's Cove, and with our entry into the reeds, all landmarks were obliterated with startling suddenness. The sun alone now marked our course. The ground now became spongy, and small patches of open water,—no bigger than the mouth of a bucket,—appeared here and there among the reeds. We were completely hidden by the rank growth, the reeds standing seven feet high all about us. Only by looking straight up into the sky could we see daylight; we moved with a ghostly rustling through a twilight world in which there was no stir of animal life.

At the end of an hour of this silent trudging, the reeds began to thin, and we emerged shortly into daylight. Miles Macdonell was observing the sun keenly,

and seemed at a loss. We stood on the margin of a dreary, watery expanse. In this circular area no reeds grew, and the peaty surface of it was thickly pock-marked by placid black pools of water.

"We have drifted too far North," remarked our leader briefly. "A fire has passed through this place, but like enough it is safe. I'll pick my way across, and you can follow."

He struck out into the swamp, picking his steps carefully, and we followed him. But now we moved forward in constant terror, for the peat we trod on seemed to be floating. It would sink under our feet like a well-stuffed feather bed, swelling up behind us. We seemed to be treading on a blanket of peat,—and a tattered one at that,—that spread itself over a lake of black ooze. The thought of what lay under us was not pleasant, and some of the older women folks, not being so *gleg* (active) as the rest of us at avoiding holes and keeping balance on the heaving peat, began to cry out against Captain Macdonell, threatening to turn back.

It was old Elspeth MacBeath who at last brought us all to a halt. "I'll go no further across this outlandish place," she cried out. "Not one step more will I go. Do you hear me, Captain Macdonell? I'm fair dizzy with rampaging through this water. It's no place for an old wife like me. My old legs are too stiff in the joints for me to be jumping like a *paddock* (frog) on the face of this devil's brew. It's the terrible fine man ye are, Miles Macdonell, to get us for-wandered in this awesome place."

The old dame's clatter brought everybody to a halt.

Miles Macdonell picked his way back over the muskeg till he reached the side of the rebellious Beth.

"Come now, woman," said the agent coaxingly, "we're halfway across now and no harm done."

"Listen to the man," shrilled the grim-faced old dame indignantly. "No harm done indeed! My old legs are stiffer than they'd be with a week's blanket posting, and my coattails are sticking to my knees." And so saying, Beth MacBeath lifted her bedraggled skirts and exhibited a pair of stout knees.

But Miles Macdonell, all the days of him, could do more with the women folks than he could with the men (and the Lord knows that were a-plenty). He was wondrously gentle with them at all times, and had a quaint coaxing way with him that brought him the long soft glances that set men's hearts a-fluttering. Yet for all his gallantries, and all his coaxing smiles, he was a wholesome, undesigning man, of whom no thoughtless maid, or weak woman, had need to be feared. At least, so I have been told by many who knew Miles Macdonell in his wilder days and I believe it to be so.

"Och, mother," he cried, with a great gust of laughter, "you'll be posting blankets by the Red River for many a day yet, just for conceit of yourself. We're halfway across, or near to it, and I'll have a hot fire and a dish of tea for you at the other side, if I have to make both the same with my own hands. Now Captain Turner, he got cold in the belly of him, and turned back at Churchill, and look what . . ."

"Don't you dare mention that man's name to me," cried old Beth quickly. "I'm not one to turn back, and it's the black impudent carle ye are, Captain Mac-

donell, to speak such a word. But my legs are weary for all that, and I do wish we were out of this place. I do so indeed." The old lips trembled.

"And so do I, mother," said Miles Macdonell, and quick and neat he put a hairy hand under the old lady's quivering chin, and bending down, kissed her fair on the mouth. And thereupon we proceeded once more, and no other man in the company could have managed the things so agreeably.

We were, as Miles Macdonell said, near halfway across the quivering expanse, but every step forward added to our difficulties and fears. The peaty blanket under our feet seemed to get thinner and thinner as we neared the heart of the morass, and at times we had to pick our way very cautiously round ragged stretches of black water. Sometimes we stood still in our tracks for a while until the agent went ahead to discover a safe passage for us. At such times, we could survey our surroundings, and what we saw was truly unnerving.

The surface of the dreary black waste moved slowly up and down in a manner that minded me of a wind-swept hayfield. As Miles Macdonell went jumping this way and that over the peat, it sank deeply under his weight, rising behind him again as he took new footing,—much in the manner of thin but elastic ice when brought under the weight of a swift skater. Seen from a distance, the agent was the centre of a depression in the muskeg, which billowed outward from his feet in sluggish, concentric rings. We could see these sullen billows spread outward till the whole morassic expanse seemed to be gently undulating. It was a

sight to daunt any man accustomed all his life to granite under his brogues, for the thought of what lay under the thin and ragged blanket of peat was constantly in our minds.

Even so, we kept moving forward, and the crossing might have been completed without a mishap, but for my own impetuousness. We had come upon sounder footing, when, glancing to one side, my eyes fell upon what appeared to be a pair of ducks guddling round the edge of a patch of open water close by. Thinking to have a shot at them, I took my musket and set off across the muskeg. We were not far from the reeds, and intent upon the ducks, I paid too little heed to my feet. Suddenly the birds raised their heads and looked curiously in my direction, and throwing caution to the wind, I spurted forward quickly in a clumsy effort to get a close shot at them. As Miles Macdonell had told us, a fire had passed over the muskeg, burning the sun-dried surface of the peat, and in places eating holes down into the bottomless ooze beneath. These holes were gradually closing in as the vegetation slowly asserted its former supremacy, and they were doubly dangerous because their surfaces closed in most rapidly.

But I knew nothing of this. With my musket gripped in both hands, so as to be ready for a quick upward shot, I plunged squarely into one of these bottomless wells of black ooze. Down I went into the soupy liquid. Where my downward journey might have ended I know not, had it not been for my long musket, which, tightly gripped at stock and barrel, caught across the treacherous cavity. The greedy ooze rose to

my chin, but the musket held, and when, by sheer muscular effort of my arms, I had raised myself up so that first one elbow, and then the other, was raised over the musket, I shouted frantically for help.

Thereupon there was much shouting and commotion for, as they told me afterwards, I suddenly dropped out of sight, and my head, being below the surface of the muskeg, they scarce expected to see me again. In a few moments I heard a voice near me calling, in a manner vastly comforting:

"Donald! Oh, Donald! Where are you? Speak to me, Donald." Raising myself up, I saw Bessie Sutherland, fair as a fawn, come flying over the quaking bog to me. Catching sight of me, she hastened to me, making soft little cries in her throat. Leaning forward, she put her hands under my arms, and pulled me towards her, the muskeg sinking deep under our combined weights. I had not believed that such strength lay in Bessie's small wrists and slender body. But she pulled steadily at me, till her face went quite pale, and slowly I parted with the ooze, sprawling forward on the peat like a half-drowned rat. Then, as I lay panting there, and while the men came blundering upon the scene, the daughter of James Sutherland stood erect, and these are the words she spoke, loudly enough for all to hear:

"You're a great clumsy *gomerel* (stupid person), Donald Stewart. Just look what you've done to my dress, with your traipsing after ducks. It's trouble enough we've had to-day without running after you, I'm thinking."

And the contrary vixen, fluttering her skirts prettily about her legs, turned and left me, and because of

her railing, no word of sympathy did I get from the men, though the women clattered about me in great concern. Whereat I was greatly displeased, for assuredly I had committed no misdeed, unless it were a misdeed to struggle out of the very jaws of death.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRAITORS AT THE FORT

THE end of our journey found us on a flat that extended from the water in the Churchill River to the high precipitous banks of the original river bed. The spot had been selected by our emissaries, and its natural advantages were readily discernible. Water and firewood were at hand, and the cliff-like river bank that rose behind us offered some protection from the biting winds. Here, under the direction of Miles Macdonell, we set ourselves to the building of weather-proof huts. Back-breaking labour it was, for not one of us had the knack of using an axe, and, to make matters worse, we were most woefully weak.

A trying week went past, during which Captain Macdonell became increasingly choleric,—a failing of his when troubles pressed in upon him. In the midst of our confusion and despondency Owen Keveny, the Earl's Irish agent, arrived at our camp. I can see him yet, as he stood with his back to the fire that blazed warmly in front of Archibald MacDonald's tent,—a thick, swart man with high cheek-bones and small black eyes that glittered under his black brows. From the first, I conceived a dislike for this man. For one thing, he had a way of smiling that made me uneasy. When he held serious council with the colonists, this oily smile was ever on his face,—and dissembling words

on his tongue. Now a smile, I doubt not, sits better on a man's face than a scowl, but I had been reared among stern-faced men who smiled but seldom, and then mainly in and about their eyes. Owen Keveny's smile started at his mouth, and his brief upper lip,—ever the mark of a jealous man,—would roll back from his teeth in a way that minded me of a fawning tyke. But the smile never reached his eyes; they were always cold and appraising. But as to this, we shall learn more in good time.

At the moment of his arrival, the camp was seething with disorder and ill-feeling,—much of it, I am bound to say, engendered by the irascible mood that rode the agent. Keveny, after making a brief inspection of the gaping huts, with the manner of one in high authority, retired to the capacious tent already erected by his retinue. Meanwhile, moody and choleric, Captain Macdonell strove with the mutinous exiles. Our sufferings were keen. Snow had already fallen, and the wind, now edged as a knife, cut through our thin and scanty clothing. To make matters worse, we had as yet no proper means of keeping warm after bedding down at night. Our unfinished huts were scarce big enough to lie down in comfortably, and fires could not safely be lit in them. So, when the shortening days drew to a close, we covered our cold bodies as best we could and lay stiff and sore throughout the night, trusting for warmth to the fires that blazed outside. Then, too, we were desperately short of food, and hungry men are ever dangerous men! The mutinous murmurings grew louder as the indifference and aloofness of the visiting officials continued. These latter seemed com-

fortable enough, and surveyed our efforts to erect huts with ill-concealed derision. They held long consultations with Miles Macdonell, but towards us, his charges, they maintained an attitude of cool disdain. Men began to put their heads together, and the purport of their mutinous talk was that Captain Macdonell himself was preparing to abandon us.

The storm broke all of a sudden one sullen, grey afternoon. Archibald MacDonald, white of face, threw down his axe and walked over to James Sutherland's hut. "It's gone far enough," he said to the catechist, his voice high-pitched and his breath coming quickly. "I'll not stand by and see my wife and weans die for want of something to eat. What think you, Sutherland, of marching to the Fort?"

The elder man laid aside his axe, and looked soberly at the fiery young leader of the recalcitrants.

"It would be poor judgment, whatever," he answered. But the younger man had plainly come to the end of his rope, and was in no mood for reasoning discussion.

"You talk of poor judgment, Sutherland," he almost shouted, "but what do you propose to do to end this suffering? Is it good judgment to stay here and starve, —while the Fort over-by is stuffed with the things we need to keep our bodies and souls together? Would the Earl of Selkirk see us starve here like rats while his agents loll fat in his Fort! Would . . ."

"Hush your tongue, MacDonald," said the catechist sharply. "What sense is there in talking thus? The Earl's agents are here among us. See them before you march to the Fort. Reason with them calmly and civilly. Make no threats, but set your case plainly

before them. This you must do before taking the law into your own hands, or I cannot support you."

MacDonald, somewhat taken aback by the older man's blunt reasoning, seemed to cogitate the situation sourly.

"Will you go with me, Sutherland?" he asked at last.

"I am ready to go," answered the catechist, "and the sooner the better. Get you Donald MacKay, Cooper, Murray and Wallace, and we will see them now. Leave Captain Macdonell out of the matter."

In a few minutes the shaggy deputation was wending its way to Keveny's quarters,—a square, roomy tent set well apart from the straggling huts of the colonists. Keveny himself appeared at the flap of the tent, smiling cordially at the sober-faced men who confronted him. "What is your desire, men?" he asked.

There was some shuffling of brogues, and MacDonald spoke up: "We are here, Mr. Keveny, to ask you for further supplies of oatmeal and blankets to sleep on. 'Twas no fault of ours that we were cast in this place."

"Nor mine," said Keveny quickly, smiling more kindly than ever.

"That may be," went on MacDonald, "but I am thinking the Lord Selkirk would not see us starve here while there is food in the country."

"You are aware, of course," said Keveny suavely, "that nobody in this territory can be held responsible for your distress. Were we close to Fort York, things would be somewhat different. You could then get all the supplies you need, and at reasonable prices. But in the present circumstances, what can I do?" He threw out his hands in a gesture of despair.

"Had I been properly consulted, you would not be here at all. You have, I may say, been grossly misled. What will become of you, God alone knows. I can only think that His Lordship has been grossly deceived by the incompetent fellow who brought you here. The folly of it all saddens me. If, as I say, you were close to York Factory, something could surely be done, but here . . ."

His unctuous dissembling was cut short by the voice of James Sutherland.

"Let this idle talk cease," roared the godly man, his deep voice shaking with wrath and indignation. "We came here as men to hold serious council with men. We came not here to listen to evasive speeches, nor will we stand here in this bitter wind like beggars seeking alms at a back door."

The righteous man fronted Keveny, from whose face the smile had entirely fled.

"If you have no authority, sir, and no desire to save the weak and the helpless from suffering, stand aside and let us speak to those who have authority. We have asked for food, and your answer is: 'Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse?' "

At these words, uttered with the vigour and feeling of an honest and fearless man, there was a commotion within the tent, and curious faces appeared at the door. Keveny, a faint, bitter smile flickering about the corners of his mouth, stepped inside, the colonists crowding unbidden at his heels. Within the warm tent half-a-dozen men sat smoking, surrounded by the signs of rough comfort. Boxes of provisions and blankets lay around, and in the midst of all sat a small stove with a

fat, glowing belly. Keveny, his back to the colonists, addressed his subordinates, and his voice had a bite in it.

"These people," he said, inclining his head with contemptuous courtesy in the direction of the sullen deputation, "came here to air grievances. They demand oatmeal and blankets, and as a trusted agent of Lord Selkirk, I have tried to explain to them that they are the victims of other men's folly and incompetence."

He turned once more to the waiting deputation. The smile was on his face again.

"It grieves me to see your people brought to such a pass," he said, with a look of the utmost concern on his face. "As I said, I was not consulted about this lunatic enterprise. I came here to ascertain your difficulties,—and to do what I could, in the name of Lord Selkirk, to assist you out of the trouble that you have been led into by ignorant and unprincipled adventurers. God knows I expect no thanks for my pains. I only wish my hands were washed of the whole miserable affair."

"We have no complaints against Captain Macdonell, much less the Earl of Selkirk," said Archibald MacDonald sharply.

"No! I am the one you complain of, yet I have had no hand in this folly," said Keveny.

"You might be better thought of hereabouts if you had taken a hand in the matter at Sloop's Cove," answered MacDonald bluntly.

The Irisher's thin lips made a blue line and his eyes grew hard, but he ignored MacDonald's remark.

"There is no use in kicking against the pricks," he went on. "Certain facts must be faced, and one of

them is that there is a scarcity of food here this winter."

"You will be saying, then, that you refuse to sell us oatmeal and blankets," cried Archibald MacDonald, anger so hot in his voice that the men lolling behind Keveny all came to their feet expectantly. "Let me read you my agreement with Lord Selkirk before you take too much law into your own hands."

Opening a document which he had in his hand, MacDonald began to read, pausing at the end of each sentence to mark the effect of his words upon the Earl's agent.

"It is contracted and agreed, between the Right Honourable Thomas, Earl of Selkirk, on the one hand, and Archibald MacDonald, of the Parish of Kildonan, on the other part, that the said Archibald MacDonald shall proceed, as soon as directed, to the establishment of the said Earl, near Hudson Bay, and shall there serve the said Earl, diligently and faithfully, in the station appointed by him, from the date hereof, till the expiration of one year after his arrival at the settlement. In consideration whereof, the said Earl binds and obliges himself to provide a sufficiency of wholesome food for the said Archibald MacDonald, and farther, to supply the said Archibald MacDonald at just and moderate prices, with such necessaries as he may from time to time, require for his own use."

MacDonald here stopped his reading, and walking up to Keveny, held the document to the other's face.

"Is that Lord Selkirk's write of hand?" he asked.

Ere Keveny could reply, Edwards, the surgeon who was of his party, rose and whispered briefly in his ear.

Smiling once more, Keveny turned to the colonists.

"You have placed me in a very unhappy position," he said gravely. "Experience forbids me to meet your request, but for this once, in the name of humanity, I will risk my position and grant what you ask. Send your sledges to the Fort, and for the time being I will see to it that you are supplied with some of the things you need."

But the parting shot was fired by the hot-headed MacDonald.

"I am obliged to you for your great generosity," he said coldly. "As for the breaking of rules, I warrant there would be rules broken, and broken again, if the Earl of Selkirk were here to-night."

CHAPTER IX

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

NEXT morning Keveny and his party, saving Edwards, the surgeon, and one Finlay, vacated their big tent and set out for the Fort at Churchill. The surgeon, by Keveny's instructions, was left in watch over the camp; the man Finlay was quick to explain that his uncommon knowledge of the Hudson Bay territory made his presence a necessity. What motives actuated Keveny at this time I never learned, although it was said afterwards that he had gotten sharp words from the Earl soon after we left Sloop's Cove. It was decided that five men should go to the Fort for supplies, and MacCallum Mhor was nominated to lead the party. The brawny one named the men who were to go with him,—Colin Campbell, Thomas McKim, John Mackay, and myself. To me Miles Macdonell entrusted a bulky despatch, directing me to put it into the hands of the keeper of the stores at the Fort.

We were soon on our way, stumbling awkwardly at the outset as we strove with the crude snowshoes that the agent had taught us to make. But in time we found our stride, and plodding along in single file behind MacCallum Mhor, we came upon Fort Churchill at sundown. MacCallum Mhor sought out Keveny, who directed us to the storehouse. Here we en-

countered one Kenneth McRae, and straightway I put the agent's despatch into his hands.

At last our sledges were loaded, and this done, we made inquiries about lodgings for the night, which even then was drawing down about us. We were shown to an empty store-house adjoining the servants' quarters, and there left to our own devices. But before we had bedded down for the night we found friends,—of a sort! Two pale-faced writers, Glasgow men not long out from Scotland, sought us out and plied us with questions, some of which concerned "the bonny red-haired lass." I could have cracked their senseless heads together, but for policy's sake kept my tongue and temper in close check. Yet, to do the carles justice, they said nothing ill of Bessie Sutherland, but rather otherwise. But to hear these smirking carles say that Bessie Sutherland's hair was red made my blood boil, for red it never was! True, it had a tinge that was deeper and richer than gold,—like burnished bronze under an unsteady light. There were times, too, when Bessie's lovely hair seemed to cast a sweet ruddy shadow over her forehead and ears,—but it was not red!

There was an ancient stove in our lodging-place, and in this the Glasgow men built a roaring fire. Then they fetched us a pot of tea, and warming to us more and more as the talk went round, one of them stole out presently and returned with a huge bottle of rum. Whereat I inwardly cursed Miles Macdonell for sending MacCallum Mhor to the Fort, with what reason we shall soon learn. At sight of the bottle the strong man of the Strath trembled in a most unmanly way, and

when his hands closed on the neck of it he put it to his lips with feverish haste and drank deeply of the fiery brew. The effect of the draught was well-nigh magical, —MacCallum's stomach being empty. He waxed merry, and then uproarious, slapping the narrow backs of the Glasgow carles with such hearty violence that they were sore put to keep out of range of his flailing arms. Presently he began to upbraid the writers, calling them bloodless old women in breeks, whereupon one of the objects of his drunken raillery, rendered pugnacious and contrary by the liquor, took up the cudgels on his own behalf. The strong man, thus crossed, flew into a rage, and hurled his bonnet in the writer's face. Yet the Glasgow man bandied words with our drunken leader right manfully, whereupon MacCallum, black with rage, grasped him by the seat of his baggy breeks and hurled him out of our lodgings, and having done this, the drunken giant stood swaying in the doorway, roaring his contempt for Glasgow and Ireland, and Glasgow writers and Keveny in particular.

Fearful of the consequences of his rashness, I laid my hand on his sleeve and sought to caution him. At the touch of my restraining hand he turned upon me like a mad bull, his arm raised threateningly.

"Go to your bed, *'ille,*" he said unsteadily as he saw who confronted him. "MacCallum she'll not be laying a hand on Ewen Stewart's boy."

At this juncture voices sounded outside, and the Irisher Keveny, stark and threatening, appeared in the doorway, a group of swarthy, unkempt men crowding curiously at his heels.

"What means this brawling?" demanded the Irisher,

glaring at us through two black slits in his swart face.

MacCallum Mhor looked at the intruder, then laughed drunkenly in his face.

"Oho! Look what we have here," he roared. "It's the Irisher that tried his hand with the women folks when the men's backs were turned. Take a look at him, Donald! It's the soft heart he has for the red-haired ones. Leave us alone, Irisher. Just be going to your kennel, and stay there till I whistle."

As he spoke these foolish words, MacCallum Mhor swayed towards Keveny threateningly. Now Owen Keveny, whatever his faults, was not one to fall back before another man's violence. With a sharp cry to the men behind him, he flung himself headlong at MacCallum Mhor, and with a cunning thrust of his foot brought the drunken man to the floor with a resounding crash. In another moment the Highlander, foaming but impotent, was held fast by a dozen hands. At Keveny's order, handcuffs were hurriedly brought and MacCallum's hands were secured behind his back.

"By God! you lousy Scotch pauper, I'll teach you to throw your lip at Owen Keveny," snarled the Irisher, white to the eyes with rage. He turned swift upon the men who crowded curiously in the doorway.

"Get everybody out that can lay hand to a rope," he shouted, and at his order the riffraff, shouting gleefully, scattered into the darkness. We were not long in learning the meaning of Keveny's order. Shouts resounded among the buildings out-by, doors slammed, and presently a dozen men, all carrying pieces of thick ship's rope, came running to our door. Keveny, with a cocked pistol in his hand, stood guarding us.

"Take hold of the . . ." ordered Keveny, and the helpless and moidered MacCallum was jerked roughly to his feet by two evil-faced half-breeds. He was propelled outside, and while he stood unsteadily between the half-breeds, the other men formed themselves into a double line, man facing man. Lanterns were set on the snow-covered ground along this human passageway, and as the brutish proceedings went forward, the half-breeds twirled their knotted ropes excitedly and set up a steady howling.

"All ready?" cried Keveny. A chorus of savage shouts answered him. He slammed the heavy door shut on us, shooting the big bolt on the outside. Then, as we stood mute and helpless in the darkness of our prison, the man-driver, in a voice harsh and vindictive, cried out: "Stand by the window and you'll see how Owen Keveny handles mutiny."

We rushed to the window. There, in the yellow light cast by the lanterns, stood MacCallum Mhor, dazed and helpless. Keveny, swinging a knotted rope as thick as a man's arm, walked directly up to the Highlander, and pointed down the line of dancing, howling men. Then stepping nimbly back, he rose on his toes and lashed his heavy rope fair across MacCallum's slack mouth. The Highlander was shoved roughly forward. There was a swishing and thudding of savagely wielded ropes, and we could see the prisoner staggering blindly down the passage of torture. Halfway he fell forward on his face, whereupon his assailants fell upon him with indescribable fury, kicking him and cursing each other evilly as they strove to get unhampered blows at their victim. I could stand no

more of it, and crying weakly like a girl, I ran from the window and kicked furiously at the heavy door that imprisoned us. I was still impotently assaulting it when it was thrown open, and before I could utter a word, MacCallum Mhor, bloody and insensible, was cast roughly at my feet. Keveny, with his pistol pointed at us, kicked the bleeding figure that lay in the doorway. "Take your man," he panted. "I've taught him what it means to cross Owen Keveny. It's a lesson he'll carry the marks of for many a day."

So saying, he slammed the door in my face.

Poor MacCallum was a sorry sight indeed. His head was a clotted mass of bloody hair, and his face was bruised almost beyond recognition. With many a bitter curse upon the cowards who had so abused him, we bathed his head and face with cold water till he opened his eyes. For a long time he lay on his back, trembling from head to foot as if in the grip of a chill. Yet not a word did he utter, although we plied him with kindly-meant questions, and we began to think that he had been injured in his head. At last and long, however, he got weakly to his feet and staggered to the table. Taking up the bottle of rum, he sent it crashing through the window. Then he sank weakly down upon the blankets we had spread for him. He spoke then, the words coming thick and indistinct through his pulpy lips: "Another day, and the fair-play of Feinne! *Dia!* Another day, and the fair-play of Feinne!"

Over and over again he murmured these words, till, far on in the night, the sleep of exhaustion sealed his lips.

CHAPTER X

THE GREY DEVILS OF THE NORTH

WE planned to set out upon our return journey at noon, so as to reach the camp before nightfall. The wind, however, gathered strength during the forenoon, and at the time appointed for our start the sun was riding deep in black, swift-moving clouds, and snow was driving out of the West. As the afternoon wore along, with no sign of the abatement of the storm, we resigned ourselves to another night at the Fort, and set about making ourselves comfortable. The room in which we were domiciled, being thick-walled, was soon warmed by the resinous logs that filled the stove, and at nightfall, with the hot glow of the fire on our faces, we laid ourselves down to sleep.

Our purpose was to set out for the camp in the early hours of the morning, the moon being full and clear at that time. I was awakened by Thomas McKim, who was ever one to prowl about in the cold dark of the early hours, and who, to this day, goes creaking over the snow to the haystacks in the white swamps while right-minded folk are still snoring snugly in their feather beds.

"Up with ye, Donald," he urged. "The morning's half gone." Having stirred us all to wakefulness, he replenished the fire, so that we arose and ate in com-

fort. Indeed, I was loath to leave the cosy place, for it was still dark outside. MacCallum Mhor, however, stood impatient at the door, and we fell in behind him. As we crossed the wind-swept courtyard, a letter fluttered against my brogue. Mechanically, I picked up the vagrant parchment. It was addressed, in the florid handwriting of Miles Macdonell, to Lord Selkirk, St. Mary's Isle, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland. Yet dully I turned it over in my hand several times before I comprehended that it was the covering of the voluminous missive that Captain Macdonell had entrusted to my care but a few hours previously. But the seals had been deftly broken, and the contents were gone! Saying not a word, I slipped the evidence of the despicable ravishment into my sporran. We were soon out of sight of the sleeping Fort. We had put several miles between ourselves and the Fort when, chancing to glance backwards, I saw a red glare in the sky.

"'Twill soon be daylight," I cried, pointing back.

My companions, however, thought otherwise.

"The sun is not due for two hours or better," muttered Colin Campbell. "It must be a fire at the Fort."

We all stopped to gaze at the glow, and surely enough it was no manner of sunrise, for the illumination, though ruddy, was not steady in the sky, but waxed and waned like a peat fire before the bellows. And presently as we stood there watching, the glow increased till at last we could plainly see ragged tongues of yellow flames licking at the sky.

"'Tis the skarrow of a fire at the Fort, sure enough," muttered MacCallum Mhor.

"Should we be going back, think ye?" asked McKim.

"What good could that do?" answered our leader. "The fire would be burned out by the time we got there, and there's carles enough at the Fort to carry water. Let the cursed place burn."

With that, we settled once more into our harness, and plodded forward. Yet, although I had said nothing, I felt ill at ease, for the sight of a human habitation roaring up in flames is ever disturbing to a man's peace of mind. Moreover, I kept thinking of that red, pot-bellied stove, and I was none so sure that the fire, if fire it was, was none of our business.

At the end of another hour there was no glow on the Eastern sky. The night was still with us, but the luminous moon, riding high through a deep blue sky, and closely pursued by Venus, lit up the silent white wastes around us with astonishing brilliancy.

We were plodding silently along the base of one of the high ribs of rock and gravel that extend inland all along the shores of Hudson Bay, when suddenly the stillness of the night air was shattered by the "Yi-ki-hi—" of a lone wolf. The blood-chilling sound seemed to issue from a black belt of trees not far to the north of us, and it brought us to a halt and set us hastily to the priming of our muskets. Ere this precautionary measure had been completed, a fearful yelling, for all the world like that of bairns in the excitement of a game, broke out. This outcry seemed to come from the other side of the ridge, and I, for one, thought that a thousand ravenous wolves were surely upon us. Yet, except for the hideous yelling, which died down as suddenly as it broke out, there was no sign of life anywhere. We listened intently for further signs of the

wolves, peering in every direction, and half-afraid, I think, to venture forward again.

But just as we were about to push ahead once more, the quavering call of the lone wolf sounded again, this time from a treeless spot fair in our path.

"Yi-hi-ki" it came, lonely as the North Star, and vibrant with a nameless menace. A chorus of sharp, savage yelps responded from a point well over to our left. Silence again! We stood still in our tracks, for the savage outcrying of the invisible beasts was unnerving.

"There they are!" suddenly whispered Colin Campbell, and following the direction of his pointed finger I saw a moving line of wolves crossing the frozen muskeg. We could see them plainly enough as, like grey ghosts, one following the other, they sped swiftly over the snow. They were close enough for us to notice their great size, and the massiveness of their front parts.

Suddenly, from the woods on the other side of the muskeg, a big black shape bounded forth, followed by a wolf. The hunted beast,—an elk,—upon emerging into the open, gave forth a cry that was almost human, and turned to face his grey pursuer, which kept racing round the quarry at a safe distance. The oncoming pack, yelling like grey devils, raced in towards the stamping elk, spreading out fanwise as they ran. The elk kept his head low, and stood his ground. The wolves, silent now, raced round their quarry at a safe distance, and I began to think that they were afraid to close with the big horned beast that stood, stamping angrily, in the centre of the racing ring.

But as I watched the grim, silent attack, I noticed

that the ring of racing wolves was growing smaller. I could hear the sharp smacks of the elk's feet as he struck the ice menacingly. Then, a wolf bounded in at the elk, slashing savagely for the flank. But quick as the wolf was, it was not quick enough, for the imprisoned elk turned like a flash, reared quickly, and struck the venturesome wolf again and again with his fore feet. We could plainly hear the savage thuds, and saw the wolf subside into an indefinite blot under the elk's feet. But the racing ring of wolves was still intact, and gradually contracting. Wolf after wolf now bounded in at their prey. The savage feet kept slashing and stamping, and wolf after wolf, instantaneously disembowelled, fell writhing in the snow. At last the elk shook his antlered head and dashed through the decimated circle of his tormentors. Immediately the pack set up a yelling like a thousand fiends, attacking the fleeing beast boldly from all sides. A fearful turmoil ensued. We could hear the savage snapping of many jaws, and we could see the elk again at a standstill,—head down and legs set far apart. The power of movement seemed to have left the poor beast, and at last, with a score of grey brutes tearing at him, he sent forth a cry like a man in terrible pain, and sank down in the snow.

The yelling of the victorious wolves was unearthly. Like demons possessed they swarmed over their fallen victim, tearing and snapping. The gruesome feast lasted till MacCallum Mhor put his musket to his shoulder and aimed a shot in their direction. When the echo of the loud report had died away, a dark blotch

on the snow was all that remained to mark the scene of the grisly, primeval struggle.

We pushed forward, talking about wolves. Colin Campbell argued, in the stubborn, assertive way he had, that the wolf, for all his savageness, was at heart a cowardly beast, and would on no account attack a man.

"Well, Colin," said Mackay at last, "what you are saying may be the truth, but you had your musket loaded back there at the ridge before I could lay my hand on mine."

It was a sly remark, and mightily confusing to Colin, who was never one to take kindly to a jest,—unless it chanced to be of his own making. There was no more talk of wolves after that. Nevertheless, we were to learn more about the grey devils of the North before the sun rose over the horizon.

The light of the moon was now fading, and we were well across a wide, flat expanse of frozen muskeg, when once more we heard the hunting call of a timber wolf. It sounded close behind us, but we thought little of it, for we were less than a mile from the camp. We had not gone fifty yards, however, before the dismal howl, ending in its blood-chilling quaver, rent the silence of the wilderness again. This time it sent a chill up my spine, so close to us did it sound, and I birled round in my tracks to defend myself.

"Come on, Donald," said Campbell. "It's but a lone wolf-dog yammering at the moon."

But I followed the others closely, with one eye cast fearfully over my shoulder, for I had a feeling that something was following me, and at no great distance

back there in the murk. I was sure that I heard the soft padding of feet, and fancied that I could discern a dark form that stopped when I stopped, and followed me stealthily when I moved forward again. Suddenly the clamorous yelling of a wolf pack broke out in the darkness ahead of us. Nor did it cease, and presently we could see the dark forms of wolves coming straight for us over the snow. We stopped, thinking that the beasts were intent on the trail of a deer, and expecting them to sweep past us. But these grey tigers of the North were not hunting deer! On they came, and when no more than fifty yards from us, they spread out in a half-circle.

"Great God!" cried MacCallum Mhor, "it's us they're after! Get your muskets ready and stand together!"

Our hair bristling with sheer fear, we stood there in the snow and watched the wolves encircle us. They were silent now, and kept streaking round about us, not fifty yards away. I counted eighteen of them. The grey circle began to contract. Soon we could see the wolves plainly, all running swiftly with their heads turned in towards us. Suddenly a wolf left the ring, and dashed in at us, giving tongue to sharp yelps. At this I yelled like a madman, and thrusting my long musket in front of me like a stick, I pulled the trigger. The recoil of the clumsily-held musket near knocked me over, but in a frenzy of fear I gathered myself together, grasped my smoking musket by the barrel and waited for the rush of the wolf. In another second he dashed past us harmlessly, snapping his great jaws evilly.

With this, all the panic left me, and with the others I stood peering out at the wolves. Now some people will assert that the report of a firearm will drive away a timber wolf. Under certain conditions it may, but I testify to the fact,—and four honest men will bear me witness,—that the report of my musket did not drive away the bold, starving beasts that beset us on that never-to-be-forgotten night in the wilds of Hudson Bay. Their circle widened, but soon began to close in again. Once again a gaunt brute left the racing ring and dashed in at us. This time, however, MacCallum Mhor put his musket to his shoulder deliberately, and taking steady aim, let fly at the oncoming beast. The flash of his musket blinded me for a moment, but when the blackness cleared I saw a wolf lying prone in the snow close by, his head twisted back and his mouth agape.

"Fire for all you're worth," shouted MacCallum Mhor. So we crouched down on our snowshoes and began to fire carefully at our grey targets. Through the smoke and the spurts of flame we could see the wolves racing round us, but they were withdrawing to a safer distance. We stopped to watch them. The racing stopped. Several of the wolves sat down on their haunches to observe us, their sharp-pointed ears cocked forward in the manner of attentive dogs. One that seemed to lack ears caught my eye, and I took careful aim at him. I caught him fair, and he whirled round and round, snapping at the air as he fell over in his death throes. With this the remainder of the pack turned tail and slunk away into the darkness. In another minute not a wolf was in sight,—save the dead ones that lay in the snow. By this time the sun had

reared his fiery dome above the Eastern horizon, and we could see the smoke rising from the morning fires at the camp. All fear left us with the swift coming of daylight, and so we went forward to examine the wolves that had tasted our lead. I made for the great brute that fell to my last shot. I was filled with amazement at its size. From muzzle to tip of tail it measured eight feet. As black as a bear it was, but when we looked close we could see the silvery tipping of the wiry hair. The forehead of the beast was as wide as my snowshoe, and its tusks as long as my little finger and a good inch thick where they left the powerful jaw. The wide muscling between the ears and shoulder tips was as hard as an axe-handle. In all my experience in this wolf-infested country, never have I set eyes on a wolf of like size, though I have seen many black ones. Little wonder that the staunchest of dogs will not close with the timber wolf. Well I know that there are folk who say otherwise, but they have not dwelt in these parts long. Timber wolves have howled about my doors for twenty years past. I have hunted them, for sport and vengeance, with powder and shot and dogs of many breeds,—honest, fearless tykes that would shake a coyote like a rat. I know whereof I speak, and I have yet to see a dog fasten his teeth in a running timber wolf. A dog will race alongside a timber wolf, with teeth bared and hackles erect. But he will slough away when Mr. Wolf, with his heavy shoulders humped, stops in his tracks and bares the side of his mouth.

In all, five dead wolves lay stiffening in the snow.

"They'll make warm rugs for the bairns to lie on," commented MacCallum Mhor.

"And they'll remind Colin not to be so set in his opinions, whatever," added McKim, with a twinkle in his eye.

"It's the truth you speak, McKim," replied Campbell without rancour.

So, greatly relieved in our minds, and at peace with one another, we piled the dead wolves on our sleighs and set out blithely for the waking camp.

"Look!" cried Campbell excitedly as we came to the high edge of the river channel. Down below us, all along the narrow sheltered shelf that stretched from the water's edge back to the Churchill's precipitous banks, fat white birds sat tamely watching us.

"It's the partridges," I whispered. "They've come at last."

And even as we watched the welcome birds ruffling their feathers in the ruddy morning light, a deer, with mincing steps and white tail flicking, came out of the trees on the opposite bank. It gazed across at us for a brief moment, and then flashed silently into the forest again. Whereat our hearts were greatly lifted, for now it seemed that God indeed had furnished a table in the wilderness.

CHAPTER XI

SCURVY BREAKS OUT

WE found the camp deeply shrouded in gloom. Our repeated accounts of our moonlight adventures aroused but little interest; the news of the coming of the partridges and deer failed to dispel the melancholy that gripped the people. I learned the reason for all this dispiritedness when I called upon Captain Macdonell,—to whose quarters I immediately proceeded with the tell-tale envelope that I had picked up at Fort Churchill. What thoughts were in the agent's mind when he examined the crumpled paper I know not. In those days he lived apart from the colonists, and towards me his manner was brusque and condescending. Yet I noticed that his hand shook as he scrutinised the envelope at the window, and there was a curious tremor in his voice when he bade me keep my tongue silent regarding the matter. This I promised to do, whereupon the agent cast away some of his reserve and spoke of the loathly disease that had broken out among the colonists.

"It's scurvy,—nothing more or less," he exclaimed as he paced the floor. "Mr. Edwards has no doubt about it now, although he has not told them yet. But he can do nothing for it anyway! He has neither essence of malt nor salts of lemon in his chest. His

books say that green victuals will affect a cure, but that knowledge will not stop teeth from falling out."

In this vein he talked, scarcely noticing me, until a knock sounded on the door. The agent threw it open, and courteously admitted James Sutherland and the Company's man Finlay. The catechist was not long in stating his business.

"I stepped over to speak with you about the scurvy," he said. "The surgeon has told us about it, and he has made up his mind that bleeding is the thing to cure it. I left him putting an edge on his lance. He told me that every soul in the camp will be bled before to-night."

"Well, blood-letting will cure most diseases," commented the agent.

"I will not be denying that," continued Sutherland. "But it is weakening, and here is a man who claims to have knowledge of a better cure."

The man Finlay took a step forward, and putting a finger to his nose, and another on his chin, pried his toothless mouth open and tilted his head back so that we could inspect the unsightly cavern thus exposed.

"Not a tooth left," exclaimed the fellow proudly. "I spat them out for days, and the blood running from my wrist all the while. What think ye of that for your bleeding? I've had my times with scurvy. Last time I got the knife across my wrist I bled for three days,—and then corruption set in. For snow-blindness, now, blood-letting's the thing, but it's the poor thing for scurvy."

"Huts! What sense is there in this gabble," exclaimed Captain Macdonell irritably. "If blood-let-

ting will help we might better submit to the lance and have done with it. Little good it will do to turn people against Mr. Edwards."

The toothless servant was not to be silenced, however. "Every man to his own taste," he replied, "but I came this far to tell you, Captain Macdonell, that blood-letting will not stay scurvy. Spruce beer will cure it, but why should we be swallowing spruce beer when porter and cranberries can be had by the barrelful at the Fort?"

"I've heard tell of spruce beer being used to cure scurvy,—come to think of it," exclaimed the agent in some excitement.

"Hut! Cartier used it three hundred years ago,—and the Indians before him," said Finlay. "But," he added, "yon was a poor cure compared to the Company's."

"And what might that be?" asked the agent quickly.

"Cranberries and porter, I'm telling you," answered Finlay impatiently,—"and that's what I came here to see you about! I am a Company's man, and I stand on my rights. I will not be bled, neither will I drink spruce beer. The Company's cure for scurvy is porter and cranberries, and porter and cranberries I will have, —or nothing."

Miles Macdonell gazed at the obstinate fellow in sheer amazement.

"We'll be seeing about this," he exclaimed. "Let us go over-by, Sutherland."

He strode rapidly over the snow towards the hut tenanted by Elizabeth Frazer, around the doorway of which stood an excited group of men and women. The

agent elbowed his way through the throng, and following him, we came upon a queer scene. Elizabeth Fraser, quick to offer aid to the suffering, had turned her spotless cubicle into a surgery. The surgeon, sleeves rolled up and a gleaming lance in his hand, stood over Robert Sutherland, who sat on an upturned log that served Elizabeth Fraser as a table.

"I'll attend to you presently," cried the surgeon, throwing a glance at us over his shoulder. He took the Sutherland lad's limp arm, and baring it to the elbow, made a quick, expert thrust with his lance. The blood blurted from the gash he made, running in an irregular course down the lad's arm and dripping from his fingers into a box of snow.

"Now then, who's next for the knife?" asked the surgeon calmly, wiping his lance on a piece of cloth and looking our way expectantly.

The agent stepped inside and indicated the man Finlay with a nod of his head.

"I have no wish to interrupt good work, Mr. Edwards," he began, "but this man tells me that he has seen much of this disease among the Company's men, and he says it can be bested with the juice of the spruce. I feel the man should be given a hearing."

The surgeon laid down his knife and adopted a professional air.

"We know," he said, "that the Indians could cure scurvy, but there is no record of any such cure in my books. Of course, scurvy is familiar in medical science. We know that it can be cured by a diet of fresh vegetables. Essence of malt or salts of lemon bring quick relief. Such medicine, however, is not available

here, but if spruce juice will do any good, I will gladly try it."

Finlay raised his protesting voice once more.

"I'll rot with scurvy before I put a drop of spruce beer in my mouth. I'm a Company's man, and I'm entitled to the Company's cure,—and that's porter and cranberries."

"We'll see about that," said the surgeon briskly. "For the present, you'll take my orders. Go out and prepare some spruce beer. You understand how it is prepared. Meantime, I'll bleed everybody. There's nothing like blood-letting for disorders of the blood. I'll take the women and children first, so that the men can do the work till the women get on their feet again."

In a few minutes the crude surgery was crowded with grim-faced women,—some of them with babes in their arms and others with toddling bairns pressing fearfully against their skirts.

"We'll take your babe first, Mrs. MacDonald," said the surgeon. "A nick in the wrist will do."

White-faced, the wife of Archibald MacDonald unwrapped her plaid from her babe, and laid it on the log, where it lay sucking its thumb, its toes in the air.

The surgeon took the tiny arm in his hand, and drawing tight the soft skin on the pink wrist, reached for his lance.

I turned my head quickly, for the baby cooed just then, and in the same moment a woman's cry,—a mother's cry,—broke the silence of the surgery. When I swung round, Mrs. McDonald, wild of eye, had her baby in her arms again, and she was crying hysterically:

"I will not let you do it! I cannot stand it! He has had such a fight, and there's little enough blood in him now. Bleed me if you will, but spare my baby."

"Come, now, woman," commanded the surgeon angrily. "This is sheer humbug. Give me the baby, and quiet yourself."

"No, by God! You will not put the knife in the bairn," came a man's cry from the doorway, and in two strides Archibald MacDonald stood between his now sobbing wife and the thwarted surgeon. The two men glared at each other while one might count ten. Then, fairly choking with rage, the surgeon pointed to the door.

"Get outside, MacDonald," he ordered.

But MacDonald stood his ground stubbornly, and in a fury the medical man sprang at him, the lance gleaming in his hand. Perhaps the man did not know what he was doing, but of a truth he looked desperate, and the women backed away from him with frightened cries. Quick as lightning the swart MacDonald caught the surgeon's arm in a grip of steel, the lance falling harmlessly to the floor. Cooler heads now intervened.

"This is unseemly, men," cried James Sutherland, a heavy hand against either man's chest. "Stand apart and let us reason this thing out peaceably."

"This is a villainous outrage," cried the surgeon, his eyes full of the tears of humiliation. "I have been obstructed in the discharge of my duty. I will ask you again to leave my quarters. I will leave this place immediately."

"Now, now! calm yourself," said Sutherland gently. "No man in my hearing can say that you have not done

well by us, Doctor Edwards. You have done nobly. But this bleeding of sucking babes is surely an ungodly thing. Surely it should be the last resort. Can we not try the sap of the spruce first?"

"I protest!" cried the man Finlay, who had been a witness of the clash between the surgeon and MacDonald. "I tell you I will not drink spruce beer. Porter and cranberries are . . ."

"A thousand curses on your tongue," thundered the catechist, now fairly exasperated by the fellow's persistent yammering. "If you must fill your belly with liquor, go to the Fort and do your swilling there, before I forget myself and start you well on your road."

I declare the reverend man towered so wrathful that the servant, with his mouth agape, backed out of the door and was seen no more that day. Now somewhat mollified, the surgeon spoke.

"I can do as you say, Sutherland, but I will not be responsible for the consequences."

There was more talk between the surgeon and James Sutherland, but there was no more bleeding that day. Instead, men were sent to the Fort for cranberries and porter, and while this supply of anti-scorbutic was being sought, spruce beer was hastily prepared. Abominable stuff it proved to be, but we drank it gladly, for the effects of the scurvy were to be seen plainly, and they were of a nature to make a bitter draught of medicine seem a trifling thing. It remains for me but to record (having regard for the incidents which, at this juncture of my narrative, crowd in upon my pen) that the cranberries and porter were never used,—for scurvy

The curative effects of the spruce beer were immediately noticeable, and the continued use of the simple concoction soon wiped out all traces of the insidious disease that had threatened us.

CHAPTER XII

OUR FIREARMS ARE CONFISCATED

KEVENY, with armed men at his back, arrived two days later. Without so much as a nod to anybody, they made for the surgeon's quarters. We were not left long to speculate upon the object of the Irisher's visit. While we were sitting by our fires resting after the midday meal, a man with a Glasgow twist to his tongue stuck his pock-marked face into our doorway.

"You're to appear before His Honour," he announced. Noting my bewilderment, the garrulous loon wagged his head in a knowing way, and went on: "Ask nae questions, and I'll tell ye nae lies. Jist come wi' me, my braw lad, and ye'll see the Cooncil for yersel'. It's a richt bonny sicht when His Honour lays doon the law, and I'se warrant he'll lay it doon wi' a heavy hand this day. He's walking the floor this minute, and that means the irons for somebody before we sit doon tae supper. Oh! I ken Mr. Keveny. But come wi' me, lad. It's best tae be punctual wi' the black ane, and he's a cantankerous man this day."

I sought out Mackay, Campbell, McKim, and MacCallum Mhor, and we were soon at the door of the surgeon's shanty. We were presently admitted, to stand in the presence of Owen Keveny and his armed

bodyguard. Miles Macdonell and James Sutherland were already in the room, which, by the arrangement of the meagre furnishings, and the gravity of the party from Churchill, had taken on the aspect of a court of law. Keveny, cold of countenance, was busy with quill and paper at a rough table. On his right hand sat Edwards, and on his left sat a horse-faced stranger. A portentous solemnity saturated the crude chamber, and this solemnity was accentuated, rather than relieved, by the scratching of Keveny's quill. This he at last laid aside, and staring coldly at us he began to speak.

"This Council meets here this morning to make a thorough investigation of the heinous crime that was committed at Fort Churchill the night before last, and" —here he made a note of something on the parchment that lay before him—"to castigate those responsible for it. I may explain to you, Captain Macdonell, and to you, Sutherland, that these five men"—he let his eyes flicker over us,—"left Fort Churchill with their supplies before three o'clock last Tuesday morning."

MacCallum Mhor started forward with a growl, but James Sutherland quietened him with a sharp word.

"You may well ask why it was necessary for the pannels to leave Churchill at such an hour of the night," went on Keveny, "on a fifteen-mile journey that is made with greater speed, and with more comfort, by daylight. Undoubtedly there was a reason, and a very pressing reason, for this hurried departure. At half-past three a writer was awakened by the smell of smoke, and looking out he discovered that the building vacated by your men, the pannels before us, was in flames.

"It was no ordinary fire that we were called upon to fight last Tuesday morning. It devoured the building in half an hour, besides endangering the adjacent storehouses. At first, seeing no sign of your carriers, we thought that a tragedy had occurred, but judge of our consternation when we found the fresh trail of your men. Need I say more? Need I add that it is my duty, as the Earl of Selkirk's agent here, with full legal authority, to investigate this heinous crime and pass judgment on those responsible for it?"

In spite of myself, I felt uneasy. As for Miles Macdonell and the catechist, they looked at us in a queer way indeed; Keveny, from the very calmness of his speaking, had made a black case against us. At last Miles Macdonell spoke up.

"What have you to say to this, men?" he asked. "Speak up, and let us have the truth."

I found my voice at this demand, which indeed nettled me.

"I will tell the truth," I said. "It is indeed true that we left Churchill at three o'clock in the morning. We took the notion to get to the camp for breakfast. I was the last to leave our lodging place. We left everything in good order, but . . ."

"But what?" questioned Keveny sharply.

"Well," I went on, "it was bitter cold when we rose, and we had a hot fire going in the stove. I mind it was glowing when I went back to shut the door. It may have started the fire, for I mind that the wood was all blistered where the chimney went through the ceiling. It was no way to have a chimney. We never thought of fire until we were miles from the Fort and saw the red

in the sky. We thought of turning back, but knowing that the fire would be out before we got to the Fort, we kept on our way. That is all I know of this matter."

I thought I saw a look of great relief pass over James Sutherland's serious face.

"The lad has said all there is to say," said Colin Campbell, and the others nodded their heads in acquiescence.

Keveny jumped to his feet.

"It's a lie," he shouted. "You set fire to the building and ran away in the middle of the night. Your dirty work is clear to a blind man."

Before any of us could reply, James Sutherland stepped up to Keveny.

"Sir," he said, "I like not your tongue. I know this lad, and I knew the father of him, and I will take his given word against yours, since it has come to that."

"There is a great mistake here," he continued, in a more mollified voice. "Such criminal mischief as you hint at is not in these men."

"You stick together like burrs to a sheep's back," exclaimed Keveny. "Whatever these men may say, the evidence is against them. It is so damning that I will not honour their flippant denials. They admit leaving the building at an unusual hour. They admit looking back at the fire a few minutes later. Yet they know nothing about it,—nothing whatever! But I did not come to this court with empty hands."

He lifted a sheaf of papers from the table, and handing them to Edwards with a flourish, leaned back in his chair with a look of malignant satisfaction on his face.

The surgeon began to read:

Jules Deschamps, freetrader of Jack River, aged 40 and upwards, married, purged of malice and partial counsel, solemnly sworn and interrogate, depones, That upon the twenty-third of October last, he saw the pannels in a storehouse at Churchill: That he had observed them drinking and carousing on the night of October twenty-third: That later on the same night, he had occasion to pass the storehouse occupied by the pannels, and upon looking in through the window, he observed the pannels lying about in drunken attitudes, and heard the pannel MacCallum speak abusively of Mr. Owen Keveny: That he heard the pannel McCallum say: "Put more wood on the fire, and a good thing if the place burns." *Caufa scientiae patet.* And all this is truth, as he shall answer to God. And depones he cannot write.

Signed, OWEN KEVENY.

"Is this a competent court?" asked John Mackay, when the surgeon had finished reading.

"It is!" replied Keveny sharply, and added: "A court, let me tell you, with power to order your execution. The ignorant and the lawless,"—he swept us with a baleful glance—"must be shown that the law operates in this territory."

"And we stand here indicted and accused at your instance?" queried Mackay drily.

"I will have none of your interruptions," said Keveny sharply, the colour rising in his face.

"Proceed with your law, then," retorted Mackay coolly, "for I swear it's neither French law, Dutch law, Scots law, nor the law of the Lord High Admiral. Maybe it is Argyle law, by which madmen were permitted to hold courts in outlying parts of the realm."

Keveny's big hands clenched, and his face turned black with rage.

"I will bandy no more words with you," he said at last, and there was a wicked glint in his eyes as he spoke. " 'Bring me prisoners and I'll find you law' is my policy in cases like this. I have satisfied myself. We are dealing with a heinous crime, and the penalty must fit the crime. Nothing remains for me but the melancholy task of pronouncing the sentence of the law. It is my opinion that the prisoners be carried to Churchill, and that they be . . ."

"Stad (stop)!"

With that word, uttered with the sharpness of a pistol shot, John Mackay stepped forth from our ranks and brought his fist down upon the table with a thump that startled everybody.

"Hold your judgment," he cried. "If, as you say, this is a competent court, it must conform with Scots law. I know not where ye got your learning of law, Mr. Keveny, but I got mine in the court of Monboddo himself, and I will be saying, moreover, that the old man's judgments, first and last, stood neck deep in the best Scots law. I see by your faces that ye've heard tell of Lord Monboddo."

"We are not concerned with that old stuffed monkey," said Keveny contemptuously.

Mackay recoiled as if he had been struck. Then, with a set face, he leaned across the table, so that his face was close to Keveny's, and began to speak very quietly.

"Lord Monboddo was laid in his grave twelve years back," he said, "and true it is that this sederunt is not concerned with his bones. But Monboddo is still in Scotland. They see him at every sitting of the Court

of Judiciary. The Lords of Session defer to him still. A stuffed monkey! I am speaking of the most learned judge that ever sat on the bench in Scotland. Monboddo was better grounded in the principles than all the jurists of Groningen, ay, or the Parliament of Paris. And you, the head of this sederunt, call him a stuffed monkey,—the same Monboddo that upheld the honour of the Douglas family against all the lawyers of England and France.[1] I wish the Earl of Selkirk were here."

"What do you mean, you maundering fool," shouted Keveny, so overpowered by the rage that seethed in him that he rose from his seat of judgment and, trembling visibly, leaned threateningly towards Mackay.

"That's a bone for you to pick," replied Mackay coolly, fixing his eyes upon the outraged Keveny. I declare I thought our spokesman had lost his wits, so pompously did he conduct himself in that charged atmosphere. Yet I could not but admire the readiness and coolness of his utterance, and truth to tell, he made a considerable figure as he stood there expounding the law. Slowly, as if the strength had run from his stark body, Keveny sank back into his chair.

"I ken my law," went on Mackay, "and I solemnly warn this sederunt that the law of Scotland is long in the arm,—long enough, I warrant, to reach to this God-forsaken place. Moreover, the law I speak of is no respecter of persons, and falls heavily on impostors that would be making a mockery of it.

"Who sits on this sederunt, if sederunt I may call it?

[1] A reference to that celebrated lawsuit of the eighteenth century, commonly called the Douglas Cause.—J. H. McC.

The chairman, if you please, is the prosecutor in this case. Such a mockery of Scots law would not be tolerated in any court between the Cheviot Hills and John o' Groats. Scots law gives the prisoner a chance to defend himself. He is allowed fifteen days after being served with his indictment, and in a case such as this he is furnished with a list of the witnesses' names and designations who are to be adduced against him. Furthermore, the declarations, writings, and articles to be used in evidence in the course of the trial are particularly specified."

Our spokesman ceased speaking, and let his eyes sweep the room.

"I see no jury," he remarked. "You are silent! Braxfield at his worst never thought of anything as bad as this,—this heinous outrage."

Thus our pleader argued, heaping ridicule upon the astonished council, rearing legal precept upon legal precept, and finally, with a formality of phrasing that held his hearers spellbound, appealing our case to the judgment of a higher court.

Keveny, one side of his face twitching, glanced at the other members of the council, but they sat there red-faced and speechless. Keveny's face was not a pleasant sight to behold. The blood had receded from it, leaving his cheek-bones and forehead the colour of clay, but from this jaundiced pallor his beady, merciless eyes shone forth with a sinister intensity. Yet I think that fear had the upper hand of rage in that countenance, for Owen Keveny knew that he had met his match that morning.

For a long space he held a whispered consultation

with Edwards and the other member of the council. At last, after moving his ink-pot this way and that, and coughing as if a fly had lodged in his thrapple, he spoke.

"I am cognizant," said he, "in view of all the peculiar circumstances bearing on this case, that this council may, in its haste, have overlooked a point of law . . ."

"All the points of law," interrupted Mackay. "The whole affair, from first to last, is a tissue of irrelevancy."

Keveny favoured our spokesman with an acid smile.

"You have stated your case cleverly," he continued, "and I am not one to be knowingly irregular in administering justice. Possibly, all things considered, it were better to let matters stand where they are. The case is dismissed."

We were moving towards the door when Keveny called upon us to remain.

"There is something else," he muttered.

"My policy of generosity ceases from this hour. In future none of your carriers will be permitted to stay at Churchill after sundown. It is not necessary that they stay there overnight. Furthermore, all your gun-locks must be handed into my keeping."

There was a murmur of protest at this. Miles Macdonell, sensing trouble, put in the first word.

"That is a harsh order, Mr. Keveny," said he, "and I am bound to say that I cannot see its merits. You are aware of the fact that scurvy has broken out in the camp. It has been brought under control by the use of spruce beer, and now that the partridges and deer have

arrived, we were hopeful of keeping it in close check by rations of fresh meat."

"You are not required to see the merits of my order," answered Keveny, putting snuff in his nose.

I could see Captain Macdonell's eyes blaze at the slighting words, but he kept his head, and spoke again.

"I have no desire to usurp authority, Mr. Keveny," he said, "but in this matter certain facts should be considered. First, I would point out that such firearms as we have here belong to the men who carry them."

"Lock, stock, and barrel!" interjected James Sutherland emphatically.

"That fact must be considered," went on the agent. "In the second place, I testify to the fact,—and these men will bear me out,—that the Earl strongly recommended that the colonists should bring firearms to this country. He told them that they would find them useful for killing birds and deer for food."

"He did that!" said Mackay.

"And let me say again," concluded the agent, "that these people are in great need of fresh meat. It seems a sinful thing to take their firearms away from them just when the willow grouse and deer arrive."

"You are wasting time talking thus, Captain Macdonell," said Keveny. "I will not yield in this,—not an inch! I am convinced of the justice of my demand, and I will gladly have it reviewed by the Earl of Selkirk himself. I leave for Churchill in an hour. I ask you to see to it that every gunlock in this camp is brought here within the hour. I will not argue the matter with you."

"And suppose we do not bring them?" asked James Sutherland.

Keveny shrugged his heavy shoulders.

"As you please," he said nonchalantly. "If the locks are not delivered to me, I shall leave without them. But in that event, I will see to it that you get no more supplies of any kind at Churchill."

"But this is an infamous violation of our liberties," protested the catechist. "We are not freebooters. Neither are we children. I have still to be shown, sir, that you have the right to oppress us in this manner."

"We will not go into the matter of rights," replied Keveny. "I have made myself plain, and I will not yield an inch. I promise you that."

His eyes were as cold as ice, and his mouth a thin blue line,—a face in which there was no sign of pity or compromise.

"Very well," said James Sutherland, "I suppose that we must bow to your will. The women and bairns are to be thought about, whatever. But your order, sir, is not the order of a true Christian man."

"You have said enough," snarled Keveny.

The catechist took a step towards the agent.

"I have said enough, have I?" he roared angrily. "Well, I am the judge as to that. You are a Judas, Owen Keveny! The spirit of brotherly love is not in you. You are consumed with a hatred for the people of this camp. It is written in your face, where all men may see it. You put on the outward cloak of righteousness, but God is not mocked! He will not be forgetting Sloop's Cove. You have betrayed Him, even as you have betrayed Lord Selkirk. The scorn of the people,

and the torments of hell are for such as you. May God purge you of your wickedness."

A dead silence followed Sutherland's terrible indictment. Keveny, pale as a sheet, waved his hand as if to dismiss us, and we went outside. The catechist walked away without a word, but Miles Macdonell, mindful of the business in hand, bade us gather up the gunlocks. It was no great task, for there were not a dozen in the camp. Yet even so, one or two were overlooked, my father's being among the missing. Presently they were stacked up on the floor of the surgeon's shanty, and true to his word, Keveny and his party left the camp within the hour, leaving a hopeless, desperate, and now mutinous band of exiles behind him.

CHAPTER XIII

"COTHROM NA FEINNE!"

KEVENY'S seizure of our firearms had curious and unexpected reactions. For one thing, the high-handed act drew the colonists together; the internal strife that had well-nigh destroyed the camp yielded place to a common, and therefore unifying, hatred of the Irisher. This strange reaction in turn affected the status of the unhappy agent. The colonists turned to him once more with new loyalty, and quite visibly heartened by the turn of events, he took the bit in his teeth and was soon throng at the task of repairing the damage that Keveny had worked. It was soon discovered that MacCallum Mhor had, like me, retained his musket, and Miles Macdonell himself discovered, with commendable promptitude, a considerable store of powder and shot that had eluded the searching eyes of Keveny's men. This ammunition he handed to me, bidding me to be careful of it. Within an hour it was, with our muskets, hidden in a cave-like hole that MacCallum Mhor found among the trees behind the camp. The agent next put men to the making of deer snares; a coil of stout wire produced by Alexander Matheson made possible these contraptions.

The six weeks that followed these activities brought the camp into the ferocious jaws of a Hudson Bay winter, but they also brought us an abundance of appetis-

ing and sustaining food,—fresh venison and partridge. To me these weeks of shortening days brought health and happiness,—and no less important than these God-given boons (to the mind of a growing lad) the spice of that sort of adventure that, despite the teeth of the law, keeps the poacher at his nets and snares. Also, they brought the day of reckoning between MacCallum Mhor and Owen Keveny, to which I may now direct my pen.

The deer were numerous along both banks of the Churchill, and Keveny and his party were hardly at the Fort before I stalked and shot a careless buck. I was feeling mightily pleased with myself as I strode into camp that day, a musket in the crook of each arm and MacCallum Mhor at my heels with the deer slung across his shoulders.

"*Thoir an aire!*" cried John Mackay as he ran towards us. "What is this you are about, whatever. There was neither muskets nor powder in the camp till you stuck your faces over the brae. Come away with the deer, MacCallum. But Donald? Donald? where are your wits? Be travelling with your muskets. They're incriminating, whatever!"

After that we kept our muskets out of the camp, for as the days shortened the deer grew wise in the ways of the snarers, and more and more the camp came to depend upon our secreted firearms for meat. Moreover, the men who went to the Fort for supplies reported that Keveny was growing curious regarding the source of our meat. Early in December Keveny and two other Fort servants reconnoitred the camp; it was said that to their suspicious questionings Miles Mac-

donell replied curtly that there were no muskets, or ammunition, in the camp.

By this time the snaring of deer had been abandoned, for the snow was deepening daily and the deer had retreated to safer feeding grounds. So it came about that MacCallum Mhor and myself were continually on the poach. Sometimes, when a good target offered, we shot partridge, but a lucky shot at a deer brought better results for the powder and shot used. So we stalked deer far and wide, and at last the day came when we went too far afield. The morning was clear and sunny when we set out,—with Bessie Sutherland with us. We headed directly for a treeless area where we expected to get wind of our quarry. MacCallum Mhor trudged ahead, and (the adjusting of a maid's snowshoes being a fascinating duty) he was soon out of sight among the trees. Laughing and talking in a manner unbecoming any hunter, I dawdled along in MacCallum's deep tracks. After a while we heard the report of a musket, and we hastened forward till we came in sight of the meadow-like expanse where we had thought to encounter deer. Here MacCallum's trail branched off abruptly to the right. Plainly, for reasons of his own, MacCallum Mhor had set out to skirt the clearing, so I left the trail, continuing directly for the clearing. Of MacCallum Mhor there was no sign, but now and then we heard sounds that spoke of a man moving cautiously through the trees. That these sounds seemed to keep pace with us, did not, at the time, strike me as being singular. I was more concerned with the contour of Bessie Sutherland's ear. At last we emerged into the white meadow, and there being

no sign of MacCallum, we made our way to a boulder that reared itself near to the centre of the clearing. Casting aside our snowshoes, we sat down on the boulder to await the coming of MacCallum.

We had scarce settled ourselves when Bessie cried out: "There he is!" and pointed to the forest's edge. A man stepped out from the trees, and even as Bessie's hands clutched quickly at my arm, my heart gave a tremendous thump and well-nigh stopped. The approaching figure was not MacCallum Mhor! This one wore a wide red belt, and for headgear a fur with tails hanging down over his ears. In another minute Owen Keveny stood before us.

Something in the bullyar's appraising eye seemed to paralyse my tongue, and I was relieved when he spoke.

"If it's a fair question, what might you be doing here with a musket?" he demanded, fixing his black eyes first upon me, and then upon Bessie.

"You've no answer ready, you lying spalpeen, have yez?" he cried, angered at my silence.

"It's my own musket," I retorted weakly.

"It's liars, ye are, and sons of liars,—ivery wan of yez," cried Keveny, bristling with rage. "I've a mind to break your musket over your back."

"Donald has done no wrong," spoke up Bessie bravely.

With the suddenness of a play-actor, the bullyar relaxed his stern features and smiled at Bessie in a beastly manner.

"Shure it's the pity about you, little lady," he said thickly. "It's at the Fort you should be, instid of following a poacher through the woods. 'Tis a great

pity, indade, for I have my duty to perform. The lad here,"—he jerked a thumb in my direction,—"is the poacher we've been watching for. I heard his shot a while back, and hurried over this way. I have my orders. He goes to the Fort with me. The Lord knows what will happen when the Governor hears about this. At the best it means the irons for the winter,—and maybe a taste of the rope-end for diversion."

"Oh! I cannot think they would be so cruel," cried Bessie, her face paling.

" 'Tis a serious matter, little lady," replied Keveny, his black eyes devouring Bessie's agitated features. "Still," he added, "there's one road out of the difficulty. Owen Keveny is a man of reason,—with a man's heart. I've done things before now for a pretty woman's favour,—and I might do as much again."

He took a step towards Bessie, and muttered hotly:

"A kiss or two, my little beauty, and the lad goes free!"

I felt Bessie cowering close to my shoulder, and a terrible fear gripped me as I caught the look in Keveny's eye. One road of escape, and one only, lay open to me. With a sudden leap, I flung myself towards my musket, which lay near by on my snowshoes. But I was not quick enough. Keveny had his hands on me as I reached for the weapon, and kicking it well out of reach he jerked me to my feet and dealt me a blow on the mouth that sent me sprawling in the snow, for although tall for my years, in those days, I had little meat on my green bones, and had not come to my present strength. I got to my feet dizzily, my mouth thick with the salty taste of blood. As through a mist, I

saw Keveny coming at me again, yet I stood swaying there as if petrified, gazing stupidly at the great fist which poised and then withdrew for the blow that would knock me senseless. But ere it was delivered, the figure of Bessie Sutherland flashed betwixt us, and in a daze I heard her cry wildly: "Coward! Coward! Coward!" Again and again she cried out the word, her voice rising to a scream.

Keveny gave an ugly laugh, and I saw his hands on Bessie's writhing shoulders. Then a strange thing happened. The hands suddenly fell away from Bessie's shoulders like palsied things, and the owner of them was spun round,—to look into the cold eyes of MacCallum Mhor. Not a word came from the lips of either man. For a long moment they confronted each other, then both started backing away, shedding their snowshoes and heavy coats as they retreated. At length they halted, and Keveny crouched low, mouthing curses at his antagonist. The bullyar from the Fort was shorter than MacCallum Mhor, but of a thicker build, the muscling lying thick and even on the surface of his body. MacCallum Mhor had little covering to his ribs, but surmounting this sparsely-covered framework of his middle was a chest like a barrel and shoulders and arms piled high with lean meat. From the hips down he was spare and flat where the bullyar was massive and round.

" 'Tis the wonderful great fighter you are, Irisher," cried the Highlander, as he bent forward and put his weight on the toes of his moccasins. "You take them all,—drunk men and fatherless lads that have no hair on their faces. Son of a pig! Here's fair footing and

a clear day. *Finne's* (Fingal's) chance and the bare hands for it. Come and take MacCallum of Borobal."

His long arm made a quick downward movement, and something went ping! against the boulder beside us. It was Bessie Sutherland that stooped to pick up MacCallum's *sgian-dubh* (dagger) and it remained in her clenched hand, blade pointing behind her.

There was a quick rush, and the two men exchanged savage blows. Keveny, head low between his shoulders, drove his fists upward with vicious grunts. There was a gasp, and the two bodies reeled apart. MacCallum Mhor shook his head and spat out mouthfuls of blood. Keveny, now leering with confidence, attacked once more. Clush! Smack! Clush! Smack! came the sounds of the swift blows, and the trampled snow was ruddy when they sprang apart. Once more Keveny came at the Highlander, crouching low and snarling like a beast. Feinting skilfully, he grasped MacCallum and drove his knee upward. The Highlander gasped with the shock of the savage blow, but he kept his feet and hurled the bullyar away.

They came together again, and standing toe to toe, exchanged terrific blows till Keveny, grey of face and bloody, backed away. Savage and fast, the man from Borobal now took the offensive, seeking to close with Keveny. It was a well-nigh fatal mistake! With a sudden twist of his heavy body the desperate bullyar wrenched himself free, and springing high in the air, kicked the Highlander in the face with sickening force. MacCallum staggered back, turned round dizzily, and dropped to his knees. Like a flash the bullyar was upon his fallen adversary, and a moment later a gasp-

ing cry of pain broke from the Highlander's lips as Keveny sank his thumbs in his eyes. The terrific pain of the barbarous assault seemed to clear the fog from the mind of the fallen man, however, and with a roar he reared himself to his feet and dashed Keveny away. He could still see, and with a terrible face moved upon Keveny like a gorilla. The stark bodies met again, savagely locked, lurched about in the snow. Again and again the bullyar sought to maim the Highlander with savage tricks of fur trade fighting, but the younger man frustrated all these efforts by his agility and great strength. At last it became apparent that MacCallum had the upper hand. He pressed the slowing bullyar savagely, taunting him through bleeding lips, and at last Keveny stumbled sideways, waving his hands in front of his face. MacCallum took a step forward, his fist shot out, and the Irisher dropped forward on his face like a well-knifed pig. Stepping close to the prone bullyar, MacCallum turned him on his back with his toe. The bullyar opened his bloodshot eyes.

"Am I the better man?" demanded MacCallum.

Keveny made no answer, but rose shakily to his feet. MacCallum Mhor whirled him round and faced him squarely.

"Am I the better man?" he repeated, his thighs stiffening.

The other hesitated. "You're the better man. You're the better man,—to-day, damn you!" he muttered at last.

The Highlander put the flat of his hand against Keveny's mouth and sent the bullyar tottering backwards.

"Son of a pig. I've the notion to teach you more manners," cried the Highlander. "I fight no man twice with the fists, but if it's the short fight you would be trying some day, with a bit of steel to the fore, I'm your man."

With that, MacCallum Mhor turned on his heel and took the *sgian-dubh* that Bessie Sutherland held out to him. Feeling its edge, he slipped it into his stocking and without another word started for Colony Creek.

I never saw Owen Keveny again. A man of violence, he met a violent end within the year. Yet, to give the devil his due, he met death in the path of his duty, roaring and unafraid.[1]

[1] Owen Keveny was murdered in the wilds of Upper Canada by Charles Reinhard, in whose hands he had placed himself for transportation to the courts of Upper Canada. The North-west agent confessed the crime and was sentenced to be hanged by the Quebec Courts. The state of Canadian justice at the time may be judged by the fact that the sentence was never carried out.—J. H. McC.

CHAPTER XIV

JAMES SUTHERLAND PREACHES A SERMON

AS the winter wore on, the clamorings of discontent gave place to the hot breath of mutiny. Idle men gathered together in small groups about the evening fires, to engage in covert, inflammatory arguments that ceased abruptly upon the approach of Miles Macdonell or James Sutherland. The bolder of these malcontents began to cast bullets, taking no pains to conceal their dangerous activities. The chasm between the colonists and their leaders widened until Miles Macdonell and the catechist lived as men isolated from their fellows. The women folks, quick to scent the danger that impended, had long since hushed their complaining voices, and silently watched their men through speculative eyes. The tension was unmistakable. It required but the cry of a bairn or a hasty word to throw the camp into murderous confusion.

All this festering animosity towards the Earl's man and his grim-faced Lieutenant came to a head one dull Sunday morning. Snow had fallen during the night, and the colonists cursed their lot anew as they waded through the fresh snow in search of buried firewood. The sound of women's voices, high-pitched and fearful, came clear on the leaden air. Other ears than mine heard these voices, for Miles Macdonell, looking neither to the right nor the left, came striding through the mu-

tinous camp and entered the Sutherland hut. The sound of his voice, repressed but vibrant, blended with that of the catechist's, and though the words they spoke were muffled, the deep voice of the older man had the note of stubborn expostulation in it. After a while the voices ceased, and the two men stepped outside. Glancing this way and that at the sullen knots of whispering men, James Sutherland at last walked purposefully to a high, flat-topped boulder that lay near the centre of the camp. Stepping on top of this rostrum, and removing his bonnet, the catechist held high his right hand as if to command a hearing.

"Come away, people," he cried out in a clear carrying voice that all could hear. Wonderingly, the colonists moved towards him till they stood deep about the rock. Then James Sutherland smiled kindly upon us, and began to speak.

"This is the Sabbath," he said, "and so a fit day for communing earnestly with ourselves,—and God."

At this there was an uneasy movement among the colonists, and low-voiced mutterings. Noting the which, the catechist took a step forward, and his voice rang stern and loud:

"Ay, men, ye have suffered and striven. You have assuredly been given a bitter cup. But we must strive on, people, or fall by the wayside indeed. There's some among us,—I name no names,—that are treading the way of Job of old. Take heed to yourselves. Take heed to yourselves, I say, lest the Lord answer you out of the great whirlwind, even as he answered Job. Take heed, I say, lest the Lord, fearful in wrath, cry unto you: 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words

without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.'

"Ay, ye may well bare your heads, for the wrath of the Lord is namely for terrible destruction, whatever. His ways are mysterious indeed, and we must bow to His will, even as Job. We have come through great tribulations, and many more may compass us. Oh, it is the bitter cup that the Lord has given us, and I, His servant, will not be saying different. But we have put our hands to the plough, people, and there is no turning back. I could complain, and bitterly, people, for I have feelings. My heart has been bruised, bruised beyond mortal healing. My roof-tree is no more. This body has fought the ship's plague. My belly has been empty. These fingers"—he held up a livid hand—"have been whitened and burst by the frost. But, I have stilled the complainings that rise bitter in my throat. I have not inclined my ear to the talk of mutiny. I came here to minister to your spirits, and that duty, laid upon me by the Earl of Selkirk himself, I will perform so long as my body answers to my will. Conquer the weaknesses of your flesh, people, and go forward with me in peace and fortitude to the border of the Lord's sanctuary.

"Why should you be dismayed? Strong bulls of Bashan have beset us around. They gape upon us with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. But the Lord is namely for justice, and He will deliver us from the hand of the Philistine. O! men, will ye not be bearing your cross in patience, for has the Lord not said: 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not over-

flow thee; thou shalt walk through the fire, and not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Fear not, for I am with thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.' "

Then the catechist told us about sin, and the punishment that surely follows the sinner, and so grave and portentous was his voice and counsel that the men who stood before him were shaken with fear and remorse. At last he looked my way, and cried out:

"Come by me, Donald, and raise the tune of the old 46th."

As if in a dream, I moved to his side, took the open Bible that he held out to me, and with a quavering voice began to sing:

> God is our refuge and our strength,
> In straits a present aid,
> Therefore, although the earth remove,
> We will not be afraid.

Other voices joined mine,—the deep rough bass of strong men and the plaintive notes of women, till the forests echoed to our song of praise.

> Though hills amidst the seas be cast,
> Though waters roaring make,
> And troubled be; yea, though the hills,
> By swelling seas do shake.
>
> The Lord of Hosts is on our side,
> Our safety to maintain,
> The God of Jacob doth for us,
> A refuge high maintain.

As the last note died away, James Sutherland stood erect, with both hands raised high above his head, and forward as if to bring down a benediction upon us.

"O God," he prayed, and his honest, seamed face was twisted with the sincerity of his pleading, "hear the voice of my supplications. Keep us in Thy care. We are for-wandered, and to Thee, O God, we turn for deliverance. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Keep us, O God, in Thy loving care. We men folk have sinned against Thee, and must suffer for our sins. But, O God, let Thy pity fall upon the women and bairns, for there is no evil in them. Temper the wind to these, O God, for they are shorn lambs indeed. Give us patience and fortitude for our pilgrimage into the Land of Promise, for with Thine aid all obstacles are overcome and peace cometh at the end. Amen."

We raised our heads at last, and lo! as we turned to go the sun broke through the leaden clouds overhead, pouring its warming light down upon us. So, in silence we scattered to our various huts, there to meditate soberly upon the grave advice of James Sutherland, which, indeed, had driven away our cares and grievances even as stour and foul heat are washen away by the cool cleansing rain. For, indeed, we had this to set against our sorest trials in those days, that we never felt so near to God as when we were cast into darkness and the deeps.

CHAPTER XV

THE TREK TO FORT YORK

IT is an ill job to record fittingly the monotonous events that marked the existence of the camp at Colony Creek during the two months that ensued. January, even in these latitudes, is full of menace for ill-protected humans; in the Hudson Bay country it is a terrifying period,—silent, tense, and dark. In 1812, on the banks of the Churchill, it was ushered in by a succession of deadly blizzards that threatened the very existence of our primitive community; the instinct of self-preservation,—in the circumstances it assumed a communal aspect,—submerged the petty jealousies and mutinous recriminations that, under less arduous conditions, would have marked our confinement. Thus it was that while there was discord a-plenty in the camp, the hostility of Nature prevented it from assuming a malignant form.

The tail-end of January brought longer days, and the edge of February found the wily agent talking freely and hopefully about our overland trek to Fort York. So, with the lengthening of the days, we had a new prospect to occupy our minds, and prospects, however ephemeral, are among the best-known antidotes for discontentments. February passed, and March came snarling in the teeth of a blizzard that howled for three days. When the storm blew itself out, the

sun beaked down with a new warmth, and the impatient ones looked towards the South and pressed Miles Macdonell for an answer to the question that was on all our lips.

The agent was crafty.

"Any day now, people," he boomed cheerfully. "It's a long road that lies before us,—near a hundred and fifty miles across the snow, with nothing to guide us but the compass. We'll do well if we get to Hayes River inside of two weeks. The longer we wait the better the weather will be, so long as we don't let the spring thaws catch us on the muskeg. Get your sledges and snowshoes in order. Mind you, it's going to be a hard trip, and a cold one. Get your clothes ready. Leave nothing behind that will keep you warm on the trail."

Late in March another blizzard came lashing out of the East. For two days and two nights it whistled, and when it died down the impatient ones had no more to say, for now the agent sent men running with the word that set men to shouting and women to singing.

The report of a musket rang sharp in the mouth of the morning. The camp came to life ere the echo of the shot had died away. Smoke from a score of pallid roofs went curling up to the sky. Women's voices, sleep-laden and complaining, could be heard through open doorways as the men folk began to move stiffly to their morning tasks. Presently Miles Macdonell came bustling down the flat, knocking on sleepy doors and exhorting the folk on the inside to be up and doing. By the time the sun had got his ruddy upper rim above the horizon, Colony Creek was wide awake, fed, and energetic. The gear bundled weeks before, was car-

ried out and laid on the rough sledges that lay end to end on the hard-packed snow. Each sledge was surrounded by expectant women and wondering children. The agent placed two men at the ropes of each sledge. MacCallum Mhor, Alexander Gunn, John Bannerman, and Alexander Murray,—all heavy, active men,—formed the head of the serpentine procession; so that stragglers could be kept in check, John Bruce and Robert MacBeath were put in the rear.

The agent stood out in the fresh snow and eyed the waiting throng. At last he raised his arm high, and the momentary hush that followed his action was shattered by the report of the musket,—the same that hangs on my wall to this day. Duncan MacDonald threw his pipes across his shoulder, thumbed the roaring drones for a moment, and then, with a lift of his shoulder, put "The Road to the Isles" on the chanter. The women counted their children hurriedly as the men folk leaned against their ropes. The long trek to Fort York was started!

Miles Macdonell tramped back and forth along the procession, exhorting, complaining, and encouraging until we had settled down to something like rhythm in our progress. But the people, young and old, were wonderfully cheerful, being glad, I doubt not, to leave Colony Creek. Then, too, there is, for most folk, a strange pleasure in taking the road, and our road, though a long one, led to the Land of Promise. The sun shone brightly out of a clear sky, and our snowshoes lightly skimmed the beaten trail as Duncan put the old marching tunes on his pipes. The first day, and the second, passed pleasantly enough,—with Colony Creek a good

twenty miles behind us. On the third day troubles arose. The old folks began to falter and stumble, and numerous stops were enforced upon the impatient agent. Men and women alike began to find their snowshoes torturous. Worse still, the sunlit wastes of snow dazzled our eyes. Noon of the third day out found us silent and weary; some of the women and children rubbed their eyes and complained of black blindness.

"It is the snow blindness," announced Captain Macdonell. "The sun is getting strong, and the reflection from the snow in weather like this will make us as blind as moles. A dirty sky to smother the sun would be better than this infernal glare. But the weather looks settled, so we must prepare for snow blindness. There's nothing for it but bleeding, especially for the young ones."

Without any delay, for the agent seemed nervous regarding the weather, the women and children were bled. When the order came for the men to submit to the knife, there were mutterings of protest. Sandy Matheson, Andrew MacBeath, and Will Gunn put their heads together and were for arguing with the blood-spattered agent. Miles Macdonell took the high hand with them, however, and so avoided an awkward conflict. Gunn was at the bottom of the matter; he was never loyal to Lord Selkirk—a fact proven by his deponings before the ecclesiastical agent of the Northwest Company.[1] The bleeding completed, we contin-

[1] Gunn, with several others, deponed before John Strachan, D.D., regarding the alleged ill treatment they received at Lord Selkirk's hands. Strachan used the documents with unscrupulous celerity in an effort to discredit the Earl and his settlement at Red River.—J. H. McC.

ued our journey, but long before the sun set we were halted for the night,—blinded, cramped, and weak with the loss of blood. Firewood was cut as the chill night settled down about us, and as the cheery flames went up, blankets were spread in holes made in the snow, tents were pitched, and oatmeal and roasted partridges were distributed. With the coming of darkness it turned bitterly cold, so that with one accord the weary people crawled between their blankets in search of rest and warmth. Well I know that there are people in this settlement to-day who speak harshly of Miles Macdonell, but not one of them can truthfully say that he ever shirked a duty owed to us. On this night of which I am now speaking, a truly miserable night for the human beings under his charge there in the uncharted wilds of Hudson Bay, he scarcely slept. He would waken first one man, and then another, setting them in turn to the cutting of firewood in the pitchy darkness. So the long night passed. In the morning the fires were still burning, and when some of the restless sleepers discovered that their feet were frost-bitten, they blamed Miles Macdonell, forgetting that, but for him, much worse might have befallen them that night.

Fortunately for us the weather stayed mild, so that, as the days passed, we became accustomed to the steady travelling, saving our eyes and legs when on the move, and preparing great fires before we settled down for the night. Thus, without any serious mishaps, we proceeded for near a hundred miles. Then the wilderness became sullen. A wind started up in the West, wafting the snow along the ridges of the drifts in a way

that minded me of reek drifting across heather that the fire has passed over. The horizon to the south was dimly illuminated, as if the futile sun had found a crack, well down on the rim of the world, through which to send his wan rays. This yellowish tinge disappeared as the wind strengthened, and the sky became a smoky grey dome. Hourly the speed of the wind increased. At noon it whistled steadily. The sky became less definite to the eye, seemingly obscured in fathoms of grey mist. At two o'clock in the afternoon twilight seemed to have settled about us. Miles Macdonell raced back along the silent procession, warning us to keep close together, and bidding us step smartly so as to reach the shelter of a belt of trees that lay somewhere ahead of us. Muffled to the eyes, with our heads tilted forward to escape the cruel edge of the wind, we pushed on silently. It was stern going, for the wind was now driving powdery snow before it, to the accompaniment of a muffled roar. Presently we were plunging into a white smother, and our difficulties increased as hard little drifts, running in all directions, formed in our path. Every now and then a ghost-like figure, eyebrows and beard caked with snow, passed and repassed the toiling colonists. After a while this figure fell in step with James Sutherland, to whose sledge I was attached, and the muffled voice of the agent came to my ears:

". . . was afraid of this, Sutherland . . . must keep going. We must be nearing the Nelson. I marked the trees before noon. If we miss them, God knows . . . Mrs. MacKay will last till we get to them. The woman is in a bad way. We'll have to leave her

here. . . . They can follow on. . . . These infernal drifts. . . . Keep them going. If we stop we're done for."

The voice was abruptly smothered as the agent plunged forward once more. Somewhere in the icy smother ahead of me a sucking bairn started to cry, and a few minutes later I fell across the sledge ahead of me. The train had come to a standstill. The thing most dreaded by the agent had happened. Before we had time to ask any questions Miles Macdonell stumbled past us, shouting: "Keep your places. The trees are just ahead of us."

Muffled shouts sounded ahead of us (we learned later that the wife of George Campbell, in giving breast to her baby, had been thrown into a snowdrift by a sudden lurch of the sledge) and presently we moved forward again. All at once the wind seemed to slacken, and the sledge in front of me drew away swiftly from my weary feet. I heard excited voices, and looking up, I saw that we were on the fringe of a thick belt of trees that shut the storm out like a door. Another minute brought the entire train into the shelter. Ere the women folks had gotten to their feet axes were slashing furiously among the dwarfed trees, and in less time than it takes me to tell of it, a fire was going. Round this welcome blaze the half-frozen people gathered, thawing out frozen fingers and toes with snow. A score of men rushed to the erection of the first tent. Into this rude shelter the young wife of Angus MacKay was tenderly carried. The exhausted travellers then set about making themselves comfortable for the night. Next morn-

ing the procession moved on, but a fragment of it remained in the camp site.

. . . . . .

At the mouth of the morning of April 16th a thin wisp of smoke might have been seen issuing from what appeared to be a small mound of snow that alleviated the sullen expanse of wilderness some forty miles north of Fort York. A closer examination of the mysterious mound would have revealed a tiny conical-shaped tent, banked high with snow. Inside this rude shelter were five white people. Two of them slept in the pungent smoke, and two of them, Angus MacKay and his sister-in-law, were awake and watchful over the pain-racked body of a young woman. A low, crescendo moan came from the white-faced sufferer, and Angus MacKay clenched his hands and turned away his face. The woman at his side, stout, calm, and capable, bent close over the suffering woman, stroking her forehead gently and speaking soft Gaelic words. The moaning ceased, and the woman turned to the fire and put a finger in a pan of snow-water that sat on the embers. Once again the young woman on the pallet began to moan, and the woman by the fire turned quickly to the anguished husband, with a look in her eye that sent him out into the snow.

The early morning wind had an edge to it like a knife, but the bareheaded man pacing there in the snow sweated like a man brisk at the shearing on a summer's afternoon. By and by he heard a thin cry, and the woman was calling his name for the third time when he put his hand on the flap of the tent. White at the

jaw, he stepped inside and bent over his young wife, kissing her closed eyes. The woman at the fire put the pan aside and placed a white bundle in the young mother's arms.

"Here's your little daughter, love," said she cheerily. "Take a look at her, Angus. Is she not the little dove, —dark as her mother, and will you be looking at that MacKay nose, Angus!"

The man neither looked nor spoke, but sat there stroking his wife's hair with a hand that shook.

Five days later the little tent in the wilderness was pulled down, and its site was obliterated by the drifting snow before its erstwhile occupants, led by a tall kilted figure carrying a baby, had covered a mile of the faintly marked trail that led on to Fort York and the Land of Promise.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DANCE AT HAYES RIVER

WILL I ever forget the night we reached Hayes River. It had been a desperately trying day, and there was no compensating elation when, at the twilight hour, we reached the brink of the frozen river. Miles Macdonell made a brief reconnoitre, and finding a sheltering clump of stunted pines further upstream, ordered us to proceed there for the night. Many a black look followed him as he led us to the chosen spot, and many a surly answer did he get as he set us to the dreary work of establishing an orderly camp. Almost mechanically, for we were tired, and cold to our very bones, we moved according to his sharp orderings. At last and long our tents were set up and our gear distributed with military neatness.

Meanwhile, the agent had put men to the cutting of firewood, and presently the dejected camp was illuminated and warmed by a mighty fire. The cheering effect of the open blaze was miraculous. Children danced noisily about it while their mothers, glad to be freed of the communism of the trail, busied themselves with pots and pans. Soon gallons of scalding tea were being quaffed, whereupon the dejection of the colonists gave place to a glowing cheerfulness. Comparisons have much to do with comfort. A mattress of spruce branches is a luxurious couch to the sleep-

drenched hunter; a crust of bread sumptuous fare to a starving man. If there is anything more luxurious than a cup of scalding tea in the mouth of a chilled and weary man I have yet to make its acquaintance. Some speak well of whiskey in like circumstances, and though I am not one to decry the beverage, it must take second place to a scalding cup of tea. Whiskey trickles down a man's gullet like liquid fire, and when it stops its downward course the drinker is all a-tingle, with the head a bit light, whatever. Tea suffuses the whole body with a pleasant warmth, and cheers the drinker at the same time without affecting the eyesight or the head.

So, as I relate, the roaring fire and the *quaichs* of tea between them wrought a miracle in our camp at Hayes River. A miserable silence gave way to sprightly talk. The folk remembered that they had crossed the wilderness, and were glad.

Presently Duncan MacDonald emerged from his tent with his pipes under his arm, and the talking ceased as he sat himself down on a log and set about the tuning of his temperamental instrument. Patiently he strove with them, for they were cold and obstinate. But at last he got to his feet,—for never a piper worth the name put the edge on his drones sitting down. His long right arm let the drones be at last, and he stopped a moment to listen to the mellow chorus of the reeds. Then he threw back his head, nudged the bag lovingly, and bringing his heels together, launched into "The Road to the Isles." Down past the fire he paced, with a port that Fingal might have envied. On into the darkness beyond he moved till the piercing cry of the chanter rose high above the roar of the drones. Slowly

he turned, and the drones cried down the chanter as he swung into the firelight again.

There was a burst of talk as he let the bag fall.

"Well enough played, Duncan," cried Donald MacBeath, "though I like not your *tuorluath* (accidental note movement). 'Twas thick. Still, 'tis a cold night and a man's fingers stick to the chanter."

The piper whirled at the criticism, and his eyes blazed as he retorted, "McCrimmon never fingered a *tuorluath* with more skill, MacBeath, and a piper would know that same."

"Och!" retorted the critic. "It's a good conceit you have of your piping, Duncan,—setting yourself up beside Patrick McCrimmon."

"Well, I've played his best ones, and my father played them before me," said the piper sulkily, as if to close the argument.

" 'Tis true. 'Tis true, Duncan, and I mind well your father's piping," admitted MacBeath genially. "He had the art of the Canntaireachd. Never a piper played '*Coghiegh na Shie*' with more skill; it set the lads to fighting over trifling things. A terrible fine tune it was, but a boy's practice compared with 'The Lament for the Laird of Ainapole.' There was the tune! It took your father seven years to play it to his own taste."

"Five!" interjected Duncan in a mollified voice.

"Well, I will not be disputing with you, Duncan," went on MacBeath placidly, "but I will be saying that your father played the tune with wonderful fine skill, whatever. The like of it is never put on the chanter nowadays."

"I learned it from my father, but I kept it to the *Fea-*

dan (practise chanter) while the old man lived," said Duncan modestly.

"Put it on her, then," urged MacBeath.

Thus urged, Duncan shook his drones, filled the bag with a breath, and gave us his father's tune. Very slowly, as if feeling his way across uneven ground, he paced, and by and by, as the thought in the dirge bore in upon us, there was much quiet weeping,—but not for the Laird of Ainapole. For Duncan brought his music up from the vasty deeps of time that night, and though few men know it, that is the secret of the piper's art.

"Will you be giving us '*The Market Place of Inverness*'?" shouted Miles Macdonell suddenly as Duncan laid his pipes aside. Fast and furious it came from the chanter, and there was a murmur of surprise as the agent, with a wild shout, cast his bonnet in the air and executed a step of the Highland Fling. That brought the folk to their feet. When the pipes ceased their sprightly uproar, all heads turned towards MacCallum Mhor, who was shouting: "Put '*Tullochgorum*' on her! Put '*Tullochgorum*' on her!", while he tugged at his brogues. Presently, with a mighty bound the big man landed in the open space before the fire, and even as he drew his heels together Duncan's chanter was aquiver to the king of all the reels.

A pretty sight it was to see MacCallum Mhor of Borobal do the Highland Fling; the huge fellow was as light on his feet as a fairy, and went through the dazzling intricacies of the dance with a grace and skill that charmed the eye and heightened the pulses.

"Well done, MacCallum!" cried Miles Macdonell en-

thusiastically as the man from Borobal finished. "That was as pretty a bit of stepping as I've seen,—in or out of Glengarry. It takes a man of weight to do the fling justice. Throw some wood on the fire, heroes, and we'll have a reel." To our consternation he cast off his habitual sternness, struck an attitude, and recited gaily:

O, Tullochgorum's my delight,
It gars us a' in ane unite,
And ony sumph that keeps up spite,
In conscience I abhor him.
For blythe and cheery we's be a'!
Blythe and cheery! Blythe and cheery!
Blythe and cheery we's be a',
And make a happy quorum.
For blythe and cheery we's be a'
As lang as we hae breath to draw,
And dance, till we be like to fa',
The reel o' Tullochgorum!

With a wild "hooch" he grasped the hand of the catechist's wife, and to the roar of the pipes, the Reel of Tulloch began. The gods must have paused to observe the strange spectacle,—a score of sober, middle-aged men and women dancing like dervishes on the hard-packed snow on the Nelson River's brink. For that dance was more than the Reel of Tulloch. I am thinking it was the dance of courage and fortitude and faith. Each wild "hooch" of the ruddy-faced men, each flirt of a woman's skirts, was a defiance, all unconscious, perhaps,—of the forces that sought to weaken and destroy these folk from Kildonan. The men of Montreal were soon to learn that strong waters may be stemmed, and Kings put aside, by blood that runs hot and courageous in the teeth of adversity and oppression.

CHAPTER XVII

TRACKING UP THE HAYES

DAYLIGHT gave us our first sight of York Factory, sitting low in the marshland four miles nearer the sea, and it was my luck to be chosen as one of the first party sent thither for much-needed supplies. The Fort is a short five miles from the mouth of the Hayes River,—on its north bank. It reminded me, at first sight, of a school, for high above the roof waved the Company's flag, and surrounding the property was a high, wicked-looking picket fence. But what caught my eye first were the cannon that squatted like watch-dogs on the open space between the river and the southern side of the enclosure. These guns (so I was told by a very old Caithness man who had spent near all his life on Hudson Bay, and who showed me the records kept at York Factory) helped to send French ships of war to the bottom of Hudson Bay near two hundred years before. At that time, Fort Bourbon (the French Fort established by Radisson) commanded the mouth of the Hayes River, and it is a pretty tale that deals with the clashes between the English and the French that led up to the establishment of Fort Prince of Wales, the original stronghold of the Company of Gentlemen Adventurers. However,

it is no part of my present tale, which at this juncture, however, may be profitably embellished with a brief description of Fort York.

Inside the picket fences that enclosed the Fort, and paralleling them, were the rows of buildings,—dwelling houses, offices, stores and workshops. These were formed into two quadrangles by the great depot,—200 feet square,—that faced the river. The huge warehouse was built with a square in the middle of it, and was flanked by a long, low-set building that served as the officers' mess and quarters for visitors. The buildings were constructed of massive hewn logs, and the whole place gave forth an air of dour solidity.

We made regular trips to the place for supplies, for in the commodious warehouse were stored the boats and other equipment necessary for our long and arduous journey to the Land of Promise.

There was much to do, what with rigging boats and collecting supplies; but strange to relate, Miles Macdonell was hard put to make us realise the formidable nature of the journey that still lay ahead of us. The swift oncoming of spring, the sight of the boats lying ready on the river bank, the confident bustling of the agent,—these things brought us all under the spell of an illusion, the illusion that we were near the end of our journey. It was partly dispelled one day when Alexander Sutherland, in irritation at the agent's meticulousness, demanded cynically: "How far might it be to the Forks, Captain Macdonell?"

The agent took a map from his pocket and spread it on the hull of an upturned boat.

"To be exact, Loachain," says he, "it's 815 miles from the spot we stand on,—and that's cutting corners."

The men crowded round him then.

"Here's where we stand now," continued the agent, placing his forefinger on a black dot on the map. "We go up the Hayes for fifty miles, with the tide behind us for the first ten miles. Then we get into Steele River, where there's thirty miles of heavy towing. Then we pass into Hill River,—follow my finger,—and there's thirty-two miles of ticklish going till we get to the Falls. We make a long portage there. Then there's thirty miles of hard going to the head of the Hill,—seven rapids and twelve portages. That's the worst part of the journey. We get into Swampy Lake then, and we get seven miles of easy going across the lake to Jack Tent River. It's a bad stretch of water, but it's only ten miles long. That takes us into Knee Lake, and we get forty-seven miles of easy paddling there, and maybe sailing if the wind is right. Now we're in Trout River. It's thirteen miles long, with deceitful rapids and two carrying places. From Trout River we pass into Holey Lake, and there's thirty miles of fast paddling there if we watch the weather. After we get through Holey Lake we wander for fifty miles through a string of small lakes and short rivers till we come to Eachawaymamus Brook. It's marked on the map here, but it may be there, and it may not! It depends on the weather. Sometimes it's as dry as a barn floor. Anyway, there's thirty miles of awkward travelling there, no matter what the weather's like. That takes us to Hair Lake, and we paddle

seven miles across it to the Saskatchewan River,—and our troubles are behind us then."

"It's a long journey, whatever," said Alexander Sutherland blankly.

"Wait a minute, Loachain," said the agent, his finger still on the map. "We're not halfway to the Forks yet! There's thirty-five miles of paddling on the Saskatchewan, with one carrying place. Then we paddle fourteen miles across Playgreen Lake to the East side of Lake Winnipeg. The shortest road down Lake Winnipeg is three hundred miles, but we travel fast and easy. At the bottom of Lake Winnipeg we get into the Red River, and the Forks is only forty-three miles up the river."

"The man's daft!" muttered Alexander Sutherland as he walked away.

After that, we were more heedful of the agent's instructions concerning the preparations for our journey. So the days passed, and the sun grew stronger and stronger. The boats were all ready for the water, packed with the bales that contained our gear and food. This packing was done shrewdly. No bale contained two similar articles, and they were distributed among the boats. This procedure, it will be seen, protected us from the loss, through accidents, of entire quantities of necessities.

Then one bask morning,—the 14th of May, by my diary book,—the Hayes set about the breaking of its icy shackles. Great cracks flashed their way through the thick ice, to the accompaniment of ripping noises that could be heard half a mile back from the river. The vast icy armour that had so sternly encased the

river all winter now began to heave gently as the current beneath, swollen with the onrush of spring, strove for freedom. Cracks, loud as pistol shots, rang out as the ice was overcome by a strength greater than its own. Then there came a grinding crash, and looking up the river, I saw a monstrous ledge of ice, four feet thick, rearing ponderously into the air. Up it went,—a hundred tons of it, till its topmost edge was fifteen feet above the surrounding ice. Then it fell forward on the uneasy burden of the river with a crash that seemed to shatter the ice from bank to bank. In another moment the river had completely burst its bonds, its muddy water oozing up between acres of ice. As if sucked down by some irresistible power, one side of a heaving field of ice would sink slowly into the swirling water; the opposite side of the field would rear itself up, and then the whole glassy mass would be swiftly squeezed up out of the angry flood as easily as a cake of soap is squeezed from between the fingers. Sometimes these ponderous slabs would be squeezed far up on the river bank, ploughing up tons of mud and shearing down small trees that stood in their paths. Until now the river had been a static, frigid thing; now it seemed to start flowing, boiling briskly among the grinding ice. Soon the swift and powerful current was freighted with crushed ice that packed the river from bank to bank, and as this icy freight went grinding rapidly down to the sea, the river made a sound which, heard from a distance, resembled the continuous crushing of dry paper. For four days and four nights we heard this sound. Then we awoke to a strange silence; the Hayes had cleared itself of ice.

Still the agent would not let us start on our long journey, for the muddy banks of the river still dripped with melting snow and outcoming frost. But at last and long the hour for starting came, with the springing up of a stiff breeze from the Bay, and the unwieldy boats were loaded, manned, and started upstream by the Swampy Cree Indians that the agent had engaged to pilot us to our destination. The river, half a mile wide, was swollen, and swept majestically down to the salt water at a terrific speed. The heavy oars were of little avail against the sullen current, but we set our square dipping lug sails to the breeze, and so moved slowly upstream.

All went well enough till the middle of the afternoon, when the wind weakened so that we had to take to the oars. The Swampies thereupon guided the boats to the edge of the stream, and shouting cheerfully, took to "tracking." Jumping ashore with a towline, they attached their portage straps over their inshore shoulders, and harnessed thus, scrambled along the muddy bank. In five minutes the hardy fellows were soaked up to their waists. Yet they kept on, shouting to each other jocularly as mishaps overtook them. One poor fellow stumbled and fell into the icy current, but he clambered up the greasy bank and fell to the pulling again as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. After an hour of this gruelling labour, the trackers were relieved by men from the boats, so that all of us had our fling at tracking. I can truthfully say, moreover, that my admiration for the voyageurs of the North began with my introduction to a dripping cod-line on the greasy banks of the swift-flowing Hayes. I will not be

wearying the reader with a recitation of the incredible hardships of tracking; it is enough to say that the dusky men who travel the long trail between the Forks and the mouth of the Hayes are men of iron and whalebone.

Weary, wet, and chilled to the bone, we at last made camp on the naked rocks. Tea was immediately brewed, and quarts of the scalding restorative were quaffed. Then, with the warming camp-fires crackling merrily, we got our first taste of pemmican, which went very well with flour bannocks baked on the end of sticks. Those were grand nights under the stars. Winter's back had been broken, and when this happens in the Northland miracles take place. Fleecy clouds drift swiftly across the blue sky. Flocks of chattering birds make their appearance. Formations of wild geese whistle Northwards. The Northern lights flash and tremble across the night sky, tinting it with purple, orange, and amber. The snow subsides and disappears magically. The uncovered earth seems to sigh. The period between winter and summer is a mere pause in the seasons, for Nature is throng, and the sun beaks down knowingly. So it was that when we entered the Steele three days later the air was balmy, relaxing our spirits like a cordial.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WARM BREATH OF SPRING

THE country now assumed a more kindly aspect. The bleak, marshy coast of Hudson Bay had given place to a thickening forest of tamarack, spruce, and poplar. The Steele moves like a snake on its way to the sea, and through a sun-kissed valley that is as pretty, in the lush month of May, as one could wish a place to be. Ducks and other water-fowl rose thickly from the water at our noisy approach; the ubiquitous whiskey jack kept barely out of reach of the sweeping oars. Time and again we saw red foxes slinking into the underbrush. The savage-eyed mink was frequently noticed, and rabbits scampered about the grassy river banks. Of larger game we saw little, our progress being heralded with much shouting and the rattling of the heavy oars in their tholes.

Three days of toilsome tracking brought us into Hill River, and with our entrance into this turbulent, steep-banked stream, our troubles began. The Hill is shallow, as northern rivers go, and very fast. In places its clay banks rear themselves straight up for a hundred feet, and these cliffs are but the river bases of thickly wooded hills, many of them three hundred feet in height, that stand frowning like the pyramids of Egypt over the rushing water. We had not penetrated very far into the noisy Hill before we came to the first rapids. Here the boats were emptied. The cargoes

were carried upstream for a hundred yards or so along a well-beaten path, during which time the women folks and children stretched their cramped limbs in the greening, sweet-smelling forest. The patient trackers then ran out a whale-line, and struggling in their harness, dragged the empty boats up through the swirling, rock-studded waters. This performance was a daily feature of our journey up the Hill; sometimes two or three portages would be necessary in the course of a day's travelling. On the sixth day, 110 miles from Fort York by the agent's map, we arrived at "The Rock," the lonely depot where Lord Selkirk had planned to house us following our landing at Fort York. From this point onwards we fought the rushing river by poling, warping, and portaging up and over a succession of vicious rapids and cascades. There is a long portage thereabouts,—I forget the name it went by among the Swampies,—where the river is three-quarters of a mile wide. Back from its low, rocky banks stand hundreds of conical-shaped hills, one of them towering high above the rest. It is this eminence that names the river. A score of lakes are scattered among these peculiar hillocks. The widespread bosom of the river is dotted with innumerable, densely-wooded islands. There is, in fact, much to be said in favour of that territory, for it abounds in fish, fur, and timber, and lies close to the ports of Hudson Bay. The day will yet come when this valley, which is a paradise compared to the bulk of Sutherlandshire, Ross and Cromarty, or Caithness, will support many thrifty families in health and worldly comfort.

The warm breath of spring caressed this sheltered

valley. The forests were bursting into leaf, filling the air with a clean, resinous fragrance. The poplars were already vivid with that greenness that God gives to them alone. The lofty cottonwoods whispered to each other as they cautiously unfolded their wide, olive-green leaves. The graceful elms, ever wary of the treacheries of the Northern spring, still withheld their tender leaves from the quickening sunshine, but with a mind on the shortness of the season of growth and reproduction, sent out their dainty, moss-like flowers. The ash trees, naked, dwarfed, and wise, had just begun to succumb to the coaxings of a known wanton; their long, slender buds were beginning to swell.

The more lowly vegetation, less fearful of frost, abandoned itself to a capricious Nature. The cranberry bushes had already clothed themselves. Gooseberry bushes sprouted hairy leaves. The smooth, slender branches of currants were flecked with green. From the tangle of dead grass a profusion of sublunary plants had emerged,—the yellow, upright wool-sorrel, coltsfoot, with its arrow-shaped leaves, and the flashy auriculas. The fleshy scurvy-grass had already pushed itself into the sunlight; the rarer Jackasheypuk was pointed out by the Swampies, who used the herb to ease the bite of their tobacco.

Birds mated noisily in the trees overhead. The silvery river seemed to chuckle with happiness as it rushed downward to the sea. At night the deep blue dome of heaven was lit up with myriads of throbbing stars, and a white moon cast its pale rays over the brooding forests. Nature breathed warmly upon the Northland, and it was lush.

It was in the early part of such an evening that Bessie Sutherland and I set out to climb a hill that stuck itself up through the surrounding trees like a gigantic green thimble. On the way, we came upon a small stream,—a trifling strip of shallow water that oozed through the bog. Without a thought I leapt across it, and turned to give Bessie my hand. But women are queer creatures,—at times! The lass that had run across the heaving muskeg to my rescue at Hudson Bay would not cross this ditch, although we could clasp hands across it. She stood hesitant on its brink, and when I laughed at her fear she cried out upon me for deserting her. I took a long step and stood beside her once more, and with a show of impatience cried: "I will carry you across, Bessie." Heedless of her exclamation of alarm, I swept my arms about her, —and kissed her!

They say that a grand scene rewards those who take the trouble to climb to the summit of that green, thimble-like hill that stands brooding over the valley of the Hill. The nearest I got to it was a channel of water that oozed through the bog near to its base. It is no easy matter to jump ditches with a lass in your arms that yields prettily to your first kisses. It is much pleasanter to sit with her on the mossy trunk of a fallen tree in such a way that the rays of moonlight, coming through the trees, fall across her hair.

The mellow moon had climbed far through the blue vault ere Bessie Sutherland and I set out, hand in hand, for the camp. Ever impetuous, I was keen for the immediate announcement of our betrothal.

"Your father can put up the banns," I urged, "and

then we can be wed when we reach the Forks. I have money for our needs, and I will build a house for us,—a pretty one with two rooms."

But to my ardent planning my dewy-eyed lass offered sweet opposition,—a habit of hers that, truth to tell, has saved me from many a mistake in these later years.

Stroking my hair in a manner vastly pleasing, she replied: "Be patient, Donald. There's a long road ahead of us yet, and we'd better be settled, and see the old folks settled, before we wed."

My heart swelled in my breast as Bessie Sutherland spoke these sweet, wise words, and I kissed her again. Indeed, she took to my kisses now with a yielding sedateness that punctuated our whisperings with wondrously sweet silences.

"Besides, Donald," she said after one of these blissful silences, "I want to prepare for our wedding. A girl has a right to a courtship, and father and mother would set their faces against a hasty marriage. It's not nice for a girl, Donald. And I've nothing to wear, and few of the things a maid should bring to her own house. And then you might change your mind about me, Donald. I am not so pretty now."

At this I took her in my arms very tenderly, and kissed her soft hair, swearing solemnly that I would always love her truly.

"Ah, yes, Donald," she murmured, as she fingered a button on my coat, "it's easy to talk this way to-night, but you've told other girls the same story, maybe, and then left the poor things."

I was glad that her face was close against my breast,

as she murmured these words, for I could feel the blood tingling in the tips of my ears, so great was my confusion.

"Do not say such things, Bessie," I implored her. "I made no love to the red-haired lass in Stromness. I swear I did not. I took no stock of her. She was but a forward lass that . . . that put her arms round my neck."

"But you kissed her, Donald," said Bessie, her voice very soft but accusing. "You cannot deny it."

At last, sweating with mortification, I took Bessie Sutherland's face between my hands, and with a great resolve I at last blurted out: "I will not be denying anything, Bess. I will tell you the truth. The Stromness lass kissed me, and I let her do it!"

And lo! and behold! Bessie Sutherland threw back her little head suddenly and laughed softly. Then, noting my crestfallen look, she ruffled my hair and kissed my eyes and whispered: "You poor, honest boy. I was a bad girl to make you confess, but it's done with, and I love you all the more."

Whereupon Bessie Sutherland gave me proof of the trueness of her words. Here ends the story of my courtship of Bessie Sutherland. Not that the courtship ended as does my writing of it. Like any other true love-making, it ran its ecstatic course, ending happily, as we shall see. But our love-making was, in a manner of speaking, a golden thread that ran through a sombre web of events, and it is of these, and not my love-making, that I set out to speak.

CHAPTER XIX

"MISANAHAGAN!"

WITH a heart buoyant with its sweet secret I took my appointed place among the trackers in the morning. A back-breaking enterprise now engaged our energies,—the climb to the head of the Hill. A succession of snarling cascades and vicious, glassy rapids were encountered, but we crawled past these obstacles without mishap and at last emerged into Swampy Lake. Here we hoisted our sails, and by patient manipulation, managed to proceed across the brief span of water without using the oars. At the Eastern extremity of this lake we entered the mouth of Jack Tent River, and here, upon camping for the night, we came across a band of Chippeway Indians. We had just partaken of supper, and were lolling on the dry grass by the smouldering camp fires, when a Swampy brought word of them. They were encamped on the opposite side of the thick poplar bluff against which we had pitched our own tents. The news, quickly spreading, caused some alarm, but Captain Macdonell, beyond asking the Swampy some sharp questions, seemed unperturbed. If he noticed that the Swampies and voyageurs melted, one by one, into the darkness, he did not remark the surreptitious desertions.

As the warm night closed in about us, the camp fires

of the Chippeways flickered through the trees, and voices, staccato and high-pitched, came faintly to our ears. "We will be staying up a bit," said Miles Macdonell with a significant inclination of his head towards the Indian encampment. So fresh wood was thrown on our dying fire, and with a few of the handiest colonists for company, the agent smoked placidly at the door of his tent. Suddenly the silence of the night was pierced by a series of whoops, and turning quickly at the sounds, we beheld an Indian stalking towards us.

"Be seated!" ordered the agent as we jumped to our feet nervously. Clutching a blanket about his powerful frame, and muttering to himself, the Indian came to a halt in front of Captain Macdonell. Then followed a dialogue in the Chippeway tongue,—a language which was new to me at that time.

"Way way nee jee?" (How are you, friend?) said the agent quietly.

"Meegwotch nobum pemurtus" (In good health, thanks), answered the Chippeway, a grin lighting up his savage, distorted face.

"Mantetappy" (Sit down), continued the agent, pointing to the ground with the stem of his pipe.

The Chippeway immediately squatted in front of Captain Macdonell, gravely opened a beaded bag that hung from his necklace of bears' claws, and took from it a slip of paper. *"Misanahagan"* (My paper), he announced gravely, handing the soiled paper to the solemn-faced agent. The latter scanned the paper carefully, and read out, in a grave tone: "This will certify that the bearer, Chief Matonnabee, is a mighty warrior and a trustworthy guide. He is a proven friend

of the Company. He is entitled, therefore, to a piece of tobacco from the Company's servants when he meets them. Signed, William Hillier."

The agent handed the paper back to the grinning savage, and taking a twist of black tobacco from his pocket, cut a substantial piece from it and gave it to the Chippeway. Thereupon the Indian leaned towards the agent, and in an eager, coaxing manner, muttered: *"Sparchlay nin. Pich assummin iscootawahpoi"* (I am dry. Give me some brandy).

"Cau ween arwayyor" (I have none), replied the agent sternly, shaking his head.

The Indian peered into the stern face of the agent for a moment, and rising to his feet with elaborate dignity, strode swiftly into the darkness.

"He has had enough rum for to-night,—more than enough," exclaimed Miles Macdonell as he watched the retreating Chippeway. "That bullyar Perrault has worked this mischief. The Swampies know better. You had better be taking to your beds, men. I will sit up in case the Chief pays us another visit. He has enough rum in his belly to make him awkward, and not enough to put him to sleep. He'll be back, I'm thinking."

Not liking the Indian's demeanour, we who witnessed his brief pow-wow with the agent had little desire to bed down for the night, and so we filled our pipes and remained with the agent. Sure enough, in less than an hour Matonnabee again visited us. He was mouthing English oaths, and his aspect was so alarming that we scarce noticed the comely young squaw that padded silently at his heels. Squinting hor-

ribly, the Chippeway turned to the squaw and pointed imperiously to the agent's tent. Without a word, the young squaw started forward; but the agent got quickly to his feet and barred the opening of his tent with his arm. At this stage of the barbaric pantomime, a wild shout brought us all to our feet. Perrault, the swart Metis who ruled the Swampies, bounded into the firelight and proceeded to convulse himself in a wild dance. The Chippeway Chief gazed at the crazed voyageur for a moment, and grunting to his squaw, staggered out into the darkness once more.

Fearing that he might, in his drunken state, attempt some violent retaliation against the agent's inhospitality, I deemed it wise to follow him to his camp. He made stay nor tarry, and once there, collapsed in a heap in the midst of a scene of primitive debauchery. The dying camp fires were surrounded by Chippeways and Swampies far gone in liquor. Indeed the revelry had already reached a point where sheer stupefaction had brought silence. Disgust, not unmixed with pity, filled me as I perceived that the squaws had fallen victims to the rum. They lay around like sacks of meal; one or two, not yet oblivious to their surroundings, caressed our gaudy voyageurs in maudlin fashion.

It was plain that the aborigines were incapable of working mischief that night, so I stole quickly back to our own camp fire. There was action there aplenty, for Perrault, his Metis blood inflamed by rum, was prancing defiantly in front of Captain Macdonell, chanting songs in the French tongue.

"Do you hear me, Perrault?" the infuriated agent was shouting as I stepped into the firelight.

"Oui, I hear you, but I am on de holiday," cried the Metis, snapping his fingers insolently under the agent's nose and leaping into the air with a whoop. Then, setting the feather in his hat, Perrault strutted up and down with a conceitful air that in any other man would have struck us as comical. Yet nobody laughed, for Perrault the Metis was a swart fellow, and a bullyar of wide renown.

"Me," he cried, blowing out his chest and slapping it smartly with the flat of his hand, "I am de grand bullyar. You hear me chantant le coq, eh? Oui, I fight any man,—two, t'ree hour. I keek his face. I choke him with dose han'."

The climax of this curious scene came with startling suddenness. A bulky, bearded figure emerged from a tent near by and leapt the fire. It was MacCallum Mhor.

"You were speaking?" he said quietly, and breasted the Metis.

"Mon Dieu," gasped the astounded Perrault, and took a step backwards.

Quick as lightning MacCallum Mhor dealt him such a mighty clout on the side of the head that he went reeling into the trees. The strong man of the Strath waited in the firelight, his arms folded across his tremendous chest. He had no need to defend himself. Perrault the Metis got to his feet, cast one amazed look at the hairy and scowling giant who stood waiting there in the firelight behind him, and without more ado, dis-

appeared among the trees. We could follow his progress as he went threshing through the bluff towards the Indian camp.

"A pretty blow, that, MacCallum," cried Miles Macdonell, a look of relief on his face. "That fellow Perrault was at the bottom of all this night's uproar. He'll rue his nonsense in the morning. Rum and the Metis! 'Tis the bad medicine they make, whatever. Still," he added this in a voice of surprising bitterness, "that same has built the Beaver Club at Montreal. Hark!"

Somewhere in the forest beyond the river a wolf sent up his dismal cry. It hung in the flaccid air for a while,—unanswered. No other sound broke the intense hush of the wilderness, and at a gesture from the sleepy agent, we sought our beds. In the morning there was no sign of our dusky neighbours of the night, and Perrault the Metis had disappeared. But we were destined to meet the deserter again!

CHAPTER XX

THE ACCIDENT AT THE FALLS

THE warmth of early summer brought discomforts peculiar to the North. Mosquitoes and blackflies made their appearance soon after we left Jack Tent River. The stings of these miserable insects were well-nigh unbearable, our blood being susceptible to their poisons. During the daylight hours they hummed persistently about our heads, and we who were tracking or forcing could do but little to fight them off. At night the mosquitoes hummed viciously about our sleepy heads, and our sufferings became so acute that Miles Macdonell was obliged to appoint a night watchman whose sole duty it was to keep smoky fires going. By setting these fires round the camp, and keeping green material on them, a pungent smoke hung over the sleepers, and this smoke, though far from pleasant, drove the disturbing insects into the forest. Jack Tent River was conquered in two days. Then came Knee Lake,—and our first serious accident!

It happened in the following manner:

Leaving Knee Lake, we came upon a beautiful but daunting scene,—the falls of Trout River. Though but a dozen miles long, it is a tempestuous torrent, and greatly broken up with fierce rapids. The culmination of its disorderly course is the steaming jaw of water that drops sixteen feet into Knee Lake. Our ungainly

flotilla took to the steep portage that skirts these roaring falls. Laboriously we dragged the boats over the rocky pathway. Two hundred yards upstream we took to the river again, tracking painfully, for the current was swift and the banks of the river studded with slippery rocks. We had proceeded probably half a mile when another rapid came into view. Miles Macdonell, who sat in the bow of a birch-bark canoe, went ahead to reconnoitre, poking the nose of his agile little craft under the rocks at the foot of the rapids. Apparently satisfied with his inspection, he drifted downstream to where we held the loaded boats.

"It's ticklish forcing, men," he announced, waving his arm in the direction of the grumbling rapids. "The water is high. Still, the Company's men never portage here,—either coming or going. See where the water falls over yon rock,—on the left where the spray rises. If we keep the boats in the water, we go straight for that rock. There's a vein of smooth water to the left of that fall,—just enough to let a boat through. It's speedy water, the way the river is, but there's no danger to speak of. Once we get through that channel, we bear off to the right a little to avoid a rock. You'll see it. Once we get past it, we draw in to the bank again and pick our way for a bit through easy water till we get out of the rocks altogether. It's worth the try, for a portage, as you see, is a killer. It's a three-hour job at best. Use the whale-line. Two men will stay in each boat to handle the steering oar. That will keep us from jamming against the wrong side of a rock. Stewart, you are as handy as any with the steering oar. You and my steersman can pilot the boats

through. Every other good man will be needed on the whale-line. Now, people, step ashore and let us get the gear unloaded."

"Oh, let me stay in the boat with you, Donald," pleaded Bessie, her eyes bright with excitement. "It will be wonderful to be pulled up, through the rapids."

"It's no place for a girl," I answered in a grave voice (feeling very mature and important with having been chosen to steer the boats).

My lass turned upon me with flashing eyes.

"No place for a girl," she cried. "Think you that I am feared, Donald Stewart? Or are you tired of having me in the boat beside you? I might have known! It's the changeable lad you are. Until this minute nothing would do but I must be at your elbow, and now, when I seek a trifling favour, you are cold and selfish. Well, there are other boats besides yours, Donald Stewart."

My gravity and condescension fled before this onslaught, and I hastily capitulated to Bessie. Whereupon she gave me a strange look, and pressed my hand softly.

The time came for the first forcing. The Swampy and I stood to the steering oar, and Bessie sat quietly in the bow. The whale-line rose out of the water as the trackers, under the commands of the agent, struggled up the rocky river-channel. Our heavy boat moved slowly upstream. There was a sudden lurch as we touched the outer edge of the churning water at the first rock, but a twist of the oar steadied our craft, and up we went into the sheltering neck of water that ended the first, and most difficult, lap of our journey.

The rest was easy. All we had to do was steady the boat,—and at times offset the current with the steering oar. Yet, leaving the protecting towline out of mind, our progress was thrilling enough, for the savage waters leapt all about us. Miles Macdonell was greatly pleased as we brought the first boat to the bank above the rapids, and we had hastened downstream to repeat our performance.

Once again, with the towline crowded with singing trackers, we slid smartly upstream till we lay under the flat rock that marked the entrance into the broken water. It may have been the over-confidence of the trackers, or our own carelessness at the steering oar, or a sudden grasping sweep of the adjacent rapids,—but whatever it was that caused it, our boat gave a sudden sinking sweep that threw the Swampy violently against me. The boat, answering to the violent motion, rolled quickly on its side, and before any of us could raise a hand or cry out, we were tipped neatly into the water. When I got my head above the surface I was a good fifty feet below the rock where the accident occurred. I got a glimpse of people running along the bank, but the roar of the water drowned out all other sounds.

It was a lucky thing for me that I had been bred near the sea. I could swim like an otter, and felt no fear of drowning. So, by instinct, I rolled in the swift water and faced upstream. Then I saw Bessie, wild-eyed with terror, struggling in the water a few yards from me. Half a dozen strokes took me to her, and with my left hand I grasped the clothes between her shoulders. By this time, however, she had lost control of herself, and she clutched me with desperate hands,

so that my head went under. I shook her off, and turning quickly on my back, took her glossy little head between my hands and drew it up on my chest.

"Don't struggle, Bessie," I ordered her sternly, as her hands clawed back at mine. "Lie still, and you are safe."

She lay still then, and I struck out sternly for the shore, backing against the heavy current. It had been a tolerably easy task had I been unhampered, but with Bessie weighing me down I made a feeble showing against the swift water. After a while I lost all track of time, and darkness settled blackly about me. Yet I could feel a cold face between my hands, and I kept my legs going. Several hours passed, and I grew too weary and numb to kick any more, and so, without pain, I sank slowly down into the amber depths of the river. I remembered coming to rest at last on the gravelly bottom, and I remember, too, that it was dimly illuminated by the rays of the sun. No sooner was I settled down on the gravelly bed, however, than I heard harsh, excited voices. I wondered greatly to hear James Sutherland sobbing. Then I was lifted up,—very gently, and felt rough hands working over my body. Presently I opened my eyes, to find myself lying on the river bank, with a ring of anxious faces about me. It all came back to me then, and I thought of Bessie and the Swampy.

"Are they safe?" I cried.

"She is safe, thank God," answered her father, pressing my hand.

"And the Swampy? Where is he?" I cried.

"He never rose to the surface, poor fellow," said

Miles Macdonell. "His head must have struck a rock when he fell backwards out of the boat. We've searched the river, but his body will be over the falls and in Knee Lake by now. It was the mercy of God that kept you and the girl from following him, for we could do nothing but run along the river and watch you fight your way to the bank. We caught hold of you here,—a hundred yards from the Falls,—and all sense had left you. We had to force the girl's head from your hands."

Thus the agitated agent talked, while I was carried upstream. Camp was made at the portage, for the accident had unnerved everybody. In vain the river was searched for the body of the Swampy; beyond doubt it had been swept downward over the falls, and into the deep lake beyond.

So a rough cairn was erected on the portage to mark the place where a brave and dutiful Indian met his death, and this done, James Sutherland bade us gather round him while he offered up a prayer for the soul of the unfortunate tracker.

Next morning I was up and about, though I was of little use on the portage, being grievously dizzy with the least exertion. Wherefore, I idled the hours away in Bessie's company, and learned much concerning the love that a lad plants in the heart of a maid. There is little that need be said concerning the remainder of our journey; it was rapid and uneventful. I mind that we hoisted sails and sped swiftly across Holey Lake,—a pretty stretch of water with (so the Swampies said) a bottomless hole in its centre, from which strange feature it got its name. Leaving Holey Lake behind

us we found ourselves wandering easily through a series of rivulets and small lakes, and fifty miles of this travelling brought us to Eachawaymamus Brook, through the bewildering channels of which we blundered for thirty miles. There was scarce enough water in the reedy streams to float our boats, and ten beaver dams, all in a state of good repair, were encountered. These we opened and closed as we passed along. Our progress through this mysterious marsh was slow and painful,—a matter of back-breaking labour without the spice of danger. The Eachawaymamus Brook led us to Hairy Lake, from which we passed into the Sea River arm of the mighty Nelson. We sailed up this swift and determined river, portaged at the roaring falls, and at length, under sail, came into Play Green Lake,—twenty-eight days from Fort York. From this tranquil sheet of water we caught our first glimpse of the Company's post at Jack River, and a peaceful and substantial place it proved to be. Little did we think, as we swarmed about its hospitable walls, that it would be a refuge for us in the desperate days that lay ahead of us. From Jack River we set out under sails, down the East shore of Lake Winnipeg, and four days later we entered the gloomy marshes at the mouth of the Red River. On the 20th of June, to the skirling of pipes, we stepped ashore at the Forks!

CHAPTER XXI

GATHERING CLOUDS

FOLLOWING our arrival at Red River, there came a week of confusion and discomfort,—a result of the feeble efforts that were made towards accommodating our numerous families. There is little need to dwell on the irritating hardships of this settling-down period; indeed they were as nothing compared to the things we had endured between the Strath of Kildonan and Red River; it behoves me, rather, to speak, and at length, of the conditions that had already cast a shadow over the settlement.

We soon sensed the black discouragement that sat so heavily on the minds of the settlers who came down to the Red River to meet us. True, there was noisy spontaneity in their welcome. Yet a shrewd observer had surely remarked an underlying note of hysteria in their outcry, the minor quaver that comes from the hearts of sorely-beleaguered people. The most casual eyes could scarce fail to catch the long speculative looks and grave head-shakings of the old people who waited on the outskirts of the press.

Before many days had passed by we had learned, at friendly firesides, that we had come to an unhappy and ungodly place; our new-found friends were constantly pointing up the Red. Up there, by all accounts, was the abode of evil. The Colony extended from Point

Douglas northwards along the West bank of the Red for near on to five miles. On Point Douglas itself, in full command of the river, stood Fort Douglas. Here Miles Macdonell established his headquarters. A mile further up the river, on the point where the Assiniboine River empties itself into the Red, stood Fort Gibraltar, the stronghold of the Northwest Company. This sinister place, for so long a citadel of intolerance and destructiveness, has vanished entirely from the face of the earth. The accursed monopolism from which it sprang—the Northwest Company—no longer exists; spawned in selfishness, the creations of the Nor'westers went the way of the selfish. But in the days of their strength,—and at the time of which I write this strength was in full display,—the Northwest Company was the most powerful and ruthless combination on this side of the Atlantic Ocean. Montreal was its headquarters, and from there a few cunning and dominating men, made savage and cynical by the success that attended their greed, directed the chief and most prosperous industry between the Great Lakes and the Pacific Ocean. It might be said, in fact, that these iron men of Montreal controlled this immense territory, for while the Hudson's Bay Company had for long penetrated into the prairies, it was, up till the time of which I write, playing second fiddle to the great Montreal combination. The Company of Gentlemen Adventurers did most of their trading in the Hudson Bay territory, encouraging the Indians of the plains to bring their furs and handiwork to the forts on the Bay. The Company's employés were mostly Orkneymen,—stalwart, stern, and honourable men who

earned, and deservedly, the confidence and respect of the Indians. The Nor'westers had their Western base at Fort William, and from this powerful Fort their bold and unscrupulous French half-breed traders went forth to traffic with the nomadic tribes of the great unchartered hinterlands.

The one Company was aggressive and unscrupulous; the other was stolid, and, it might be, lackadaisical. Until the Earl of Selkirk took command of the Hudson's Bay Company, there had been little serious friction between the two companies. When the Earl took the reins in his hands, however, he immediately set the spurs to his somnolescent Company. The Nor'westers soon woke up to the fact that the Hudson's Bay Company was asserting itself on the plains.

When, on June 12th, 1811, Lord Selkirk became the owner in fee simple of Assiniboia, the Nor'westers showed their teeth. McGillivray foamed at the mouth as he urged the Nor'west partners to adopt a policy of unequivocal and decisive opposition to Lord Selkirk. Sir Alexander MacKenzie, to his everlasting discredit, backed McGillivray up. When it became known that the Earl was active in preparing for the establishment of a Colony of agriculturists in the heart of the trading territory, the Nor'westers declared war on Lord Selkirk and all his works. I, Donald Stewart, declare that to be true, in spite of all the unctuous Commissioners and two-faced officials that ever battened on the public purse of Upper Canada. This war that was hatched by the Northwest Company broke about my head. I was in the furious thick of it, and by the grace of God, I witnessed its ending.

Well, of that the reader will hear enough, and perhaps more than enough, ere this narrative ends.

Miles Macdonell brought the first settlers to the Forks on August 30th, 1811, by way of Fort York. A mere handful they were, no more than a baker's dozen in all, and mostly Irishers from Sligo and Killala. Owen Keveny brought out another party in the following year—more rascally redemptioners from Ireland. It was soon after the arrival of the first party that Miles Macdonell, to the roaring of cannon and the flapping of flags, took seisin from William Hillier (who as the Company's Governor in these parts acted the part of feoffor) of the territory of Assiniboia. By all accounts the Captain carried the thing out in all its ancient livery,—and right under the noses of the Nor'westers at Fort Gibraltar. Captain Macdonell told me that the Nor'westers were minded, at that time, to run him and his settlers out of the territory. The Captain thought that they might have done that, too, had they regarded with proper seriousness the brief ceremony, staged there under their walls, that gave Lord Selkirk the corporeal possession of Assiniboia. As it was, they were inclined to treat the whole affair lightly.

The trouble really began during the winter that followed. The settlers had a hard time of it that winter, being unskilled in the hunting of buffaloes, and further handicapped for want of horses. The Nor'westers, on the other hand, were well supplied with horses, and with all the half-breeds at their beck and call, made great slaughter among the buffalo herds, storing up vast quantities of pemmican and conveying the surplus

to their outlying brigades. Thus the buffalo herds were driven deep into the plains, where the poor settlers could not follow. So the Nor'westers and their half-breed friends waxed fat in the land that belonged to Lork Selkirk, while the settlers starved. What food the latter had that winter was purchased at two prices from the Nor'westers, or imported in insufficient dribbles from York. Miles Macdonell tolerated this scandalous state of affairs as long as he could. His patience and forbearance overcome, he issued the following proclamation early in January:

Whereas the welfare of the families at present forming settlements on the Red River, within the territory of Assiniboia, with those on their way to it, passing the winter at York or Churchill Forts in Hudson's Bay, as also those who are expected to arrive next autumn, renders it a necessary and indispensable part of my duty to provide for their support. In the yet uncultivated state of this country, the ordinary resources derived from the Buffaloe, and other wild animals, hunted within the territory, are not deemed more than adequate for the requisite supply; wherefore it is hereby ordered that no person trading in furs or provisions within the territory, for the honourable the Hudson's Bay Company, the Northwest Company, or any individual, or unconnected trader or persons whatever, shall take out any provisions, either of flesh, grain or vegetables, procured or raised within the said territory, by water or land carriage, for one twelvemonth from the date hereof; save and except what may be judged necessary for the trading parties at this present time within the territory, to carry them to their respective destinations, and also may on due application to me, obtain licence for the same. The provisions procured and raised as above shall be taken for the use of the colony; and that no loss may accrue to the parties concerned, they will be paid for by British bills at the accustomary rates.

Thus was started what is commonly called the Pemmican War! There are those who argue that Captain Macdonell's proclamation was high-handed, untimeous, and unjust, but I am not one of them. The hour for grappling with the Nor'westers had long since struck. The fight had to come. Assiniboia belonged then, as now, to Lord Selkirk, and to him alone! He acquired it by legal process; he took seisin of it before the eyes of the Nor'westers.

Miles Macdonell was no coward. He was the last man to evade an insolent challenge of his authority, especially a challenge that brought so much misery to his charges. Moreover, there was trouble at the American border; the Americans had taken to the rifle. Lord Selkirk himself (so Miles Macdonell told me) had suggested the advisability of the settlers retreating into the plains so as to avoid an attack by American soldiers, who at that time had sent bullets into Michillimackinac. Even William Auld, who had little love for the Northwesters (and less for Miles Macdonell), opined that the Company and the Northwesters might do worse than unite under Captain Macdonell for the purpose of protecting themselves against an American attack. It is a fact, and can so be proven, that Miles Macdonell went to the Nor'westers and explained the need of the embargo. He might better have talked to the moon! The minions of McGillivray were hungry for trouble.

It started with a brawl at Brandon House. Then the half-breeds, forgetful of the fact that Captain Macdonell had protected their hunting camps from the Sioux, allied themselves with the howling Nor'westers.

Numerous seizures of cached pemmican were made; nevertheless it kept coming down the Souris River. Then Duncan Cameron appeared on the scene, in command of some armed half-breeds. He captured Joseph Howse, a Hudson's Bay trader, and locked him up in Fort Gibraltar. On learning of this outrage, Captain Macdonell took control of the river at Fort Douglas with a battery. Angry men, aching for trouble, were gathering at the Forks. Finally "Bras Croche" MacDonald, a brother-in-law of McGillivray, appeared on the scene. He was for a compromise. Miles Macdonell was sympathetic. So, after considerable discussion, the terms of peace were settled upon. These terms, which were duly put on parchment, gave the Northwesters very liberal treatment in the matter of pemmican trading.

And what happened? The Northwesters broke every term of the agreement before it was a month old. The trouble between the Earl and the Northwesters had now reached a malignant stage. Miles Macdonell knew this, sensed the horrible possibilities of the deadlock, and in a moment of despair offered to resign his post. But through all his trials, the Captain had a staunch friend,—Lord Selkirk. In those dark days His Lordship championed his agent against a host of traducers; indeed the nobility of the Earl scintillates all through these dark episodes that preceded the thunderclaps of violence that spilled so much blood in his settlement. In far-away Montreal seven men sat round a table. Mercilessly they scourged the men—Duncan Cameron and Alexander MacDonald—who had compromised with Miles Macdonell at Red River. The

terrible McGillivray came near to choking the culprits with his own hands. At last they were sent back to Red River with instructions to exterminate the settlement. How these plotters succeeded I will now tell, for it was at this stage of the drama that the men from Kildonan landed at the Forks.

It remains for me to record, in this place, that the coming of winter forced us to remove to Pembina. A trying journey it was, for there were few horses, and the Indian guides, though friendly, worked their savage humour upon us.

Not to weary the reader, we reached Pembina without mishap, and there, under warm roofs at Fort Daer, we spent a tedious but comfortable winter. In the spring, we returned to our huts at Red River.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PURSUIT

IT became a custom with me, as the days grew long and soft, to make excursions into the plains. The settlement had not yet been harassed, and it began to look as if the coming of the men of Kildonan had put an end to the strife that had, up till a few months previously, marked the establishment of the Colony. The deep-laid plans of the Northwesters at Montreal had not yet borne fruit, but we knew nothing of these plans then, and my young mind was not concerned with them. I had pleasanter things to think of.

The great plains enchanted me. As spring merged into summer the grass grew thick as heather, and the sight of this plenteous expanse, flattening to the breezes or pulsating with colour as the clouds passed across the blue-white vault of the sky, filled me with a strange desire to lose myself in its vast, luscious stretches. Accordingly, I turned my face to the West one sunny morning, and headed for the horizon, my musket in the crook of my arm and my back laden with blankets, a few cooking utensils, and a meagre supply of oatmeal and tea. The sun was my compass. I rose with it, and took to my blankets with its setting. The prairies were alive with birds. I was constantly stumbling across the young nests of prairie chickens, and feasted daily on the eggs, cooking them over a fire of dried

grass. Occasionally I shot wild ducks, and enjoyed a roasted delicacy. Then to the West again. I could feel a new strength and vigor coursing through my veins, and I used to stand erect at times and shout aloud with the sheer joy of living.

At last my gangling frame was being rapidly fortified with sturdy flesh. In a few weeks I felt like a new man; indeed I looked like one, for I had filled out at such an amazing rate that my clothes began to feel skimpy. From a gangling youth I developed, overnight, one might say, into a powerful, vital man.

One morning I was awakened by a strange vibration of the sod under my head, and rising sleepily to my feet, I looked about me. To my consternation, I saw that the prairie to the West was black with a moving herd of buffaloes. As far as my eyes could see, this tossing black tide existed. It reached the horizon on the North, and blackened the horizon in the South. I was transfixed by the stupendous spectacle; there must have been millions of the animals in the vast herd. For an hour it moved past to the North, and then the Southern horizon cleared. Fascinated, I decided to follow the herd discreetly, my mind playing with the hope of getting a lucky shot at a laggard animal.

For days I camped in the wake of the great beasts, but they steadily outdistanced me, and finally their tracks led me to the margin of a vast inland sea of fresh water. Here, on the grassy margin of this immense lake, I camped for a day and a night. Then, mindful of the settlement and of my dear ones, I set my face to the morning sun and started for the Forks.

On the second day of my homeward tramp, along towards sundown, I sighted a camp fire in a clump of poplars, and approaching it with a friendly hail, I found myself under the scrutiny of three men. One of them was a white man of some bearing; his companions were swarthy Metis.

I passed the time of day civilly, whereupon the white man muttered something to his companions and grudgingly returned my greeting. I noticed then that the white man had only one good arm. The other hung, deformed and useless, at his side.

"My name is Stewart," I announced, speaking in the Gaelic. "I am on my way to the settlement at the Forks, where my people are."

The Metis exchanged meaning looks, and one of them laughed. The one-armed one turned on the half-breeds with fury in his face, silenced them with a few fierce words in the French, and turned to me again.

"I am MacDonald,—MacDonald of Garth," he replied. He tapped his useless arm, and a bitter smile twisted his face. "People call me Bras Croche MacDonald when my back is turned. So your name is Stewart, it is? It's a name that's scarce in the fur country."

"But a good name for all that," I answered quickly, for the leer on his fiery face and the twist in his tongue flicked my temper.

"Doubtless," he agreed insolently. "You'll be on your way to the settlement, you say? Man, you're apt to find it a changed place, whatever,—ferry greatly changed."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked with sudden suspicion, for his leer said more than his words.

"The settlement is maybe not as healthy as it was when you saw it last," he answered drily. "But sit down, young fellow, and eat a bite."

"What has happened at the Forks?" I demanded, a sudden chill gripping my bowels.

"How do I know?" he replied easily. "I never said anything happened. But some of your friends were toying with the idea of leaving for Upper Canada when I left the Forks. It's barely possible you'll miss some kenned faces when you get back there."

"Then there has been trouble at the settlement?" I asked.

"It depends on what you call by that name," replied MacDonald of Garth cynically. "There was a bit of a stir, but no funerals."

"I'm on my way," I broke out angrily, and without another word I turned my back on Bras Croche MacDonald and his grinning companions and set off into the East.

As I strode out of the bluff into the shadowing land an outburst of coarse laughter followed me. But I cared little for that, and only quickened my pace till, scourged by growing fears, I was almost running across the prairie. But darkness soon checked my headlong pace, and realising the long road that lay ahead of me, I halted at a convenient bluff, built a fire, and ate some supper. Presently the moon appeared in the East, and with its rising, I tramped out my fire, strapped my belongings on my back, and set out again across the ghostly plain. Hour after hour I trudged,

marking my course by a great glittering star. Of fatigue, strangely enough, I had no feeling. So the long night passed, and presently I became aware of the drowsy pratings of awakening birds. The moon was riding high clouds, but a strange pallor marked the Eastern horizon, and soon to my joy, the sun thrust a ruddy rim over the horizon, and the sleeping plains awakened to a new day. I rested for a brief spell, located what seemed to be familiar landmarks far to the East, and set off again with renewed speed. Presently I sighted smoke, then a serpentine stretch of trees. Another hour of trudging, and I was on the outskirts of the settlement.

My mother heard me thumping at the door, and crying my name, limped forward to meet me.

"Oh, my laddie," she cried, as she stroked my hair. "They said ye were gone away, but I knew you'd be coming back for your mother."

Then, to my consternation, she told me about the great exodus of our people, and as she talked, I cursed myself for a thousand fools for dawdling my time away on the plains.

"It was Campbell of Archurgle," cried my mother. "Campbell and Duncan Cameron and Yellow Head MacDonald. They coaxed us and threatened us. They said the Chippeway Indians were coming to murder us in our beds. When that failed to move us the rascals took to the trees at night and fired shots at our back doors. Then Captain Macdonell gave himself up into their hands, and they took him away."

"They took Miles Macdonell away," I cried, scarce believing my ears.

"Ay, the poor man is far on his way to Upper Canada by now," answered my mother sadly. "But you would come across him, Donald, for Campbell told us you had gone ahead to Upper Canada."

"He lied in his black throat," I cried. "I have been out on the plains, and never guessed at such treachery as this."

At my words my mother raised her hands,—a gesture common with her when she was greatly upset, and cried: "Oh, the rascal! The black sheep of the flock. But what but treachery could be expected from a Campbell of Creech. Your father always said that it was easier for a Campbell to pass through the eye of a needle than to enter the Kingdom of God. There has been no good in them since Glencoe. Well, you are here, Donald, and I ask no more. But *ochanorie,* my heart chilled to see them go. I counted them as they paddled past,—a hundred and forty of them; the Gunns, the Bannermans, the Mackays, the Mathesons, the Sutherlands . . ."

"The Sutherlands," I repeated, staring blankly at my mother, and striving to keep my pounding heart from rising into my throat, "the Sutherlands!"

"Ay, they've gone with the rest, and,—what am I thinking about,—Bessie left a letter for you."

She stepped to the table, and gave me a letter that lay in her knitting basket. Tearing it open with shaking hands I read:

DEAR DONALD:

I know not where you are this night, and my head is in such a dwam that I cannot think clearly at all, yet

I must leave some word for you, so that, if you are hereabouts, you will know that I am thinking of you in the midst of this dreadful anxiety and confusion. Your mother will have it that you are out on the plains. Indeed, Donald, we were all sure about that, but Campbell (he does not like you, Donald) has spread the gossip that you have gone on towards Upper Canada, and will meet us on the river. How much he knows I cannot tell. He is cunning, and father says that he is hand in glove with the Northwest people. He has been doing his best to persuade us to sell our gear and go to Upper Canada. Mother says he has given some of the women folks presents. He has tried to talk to me a dozen times since you went away, Donald. How I hate him! Everything is topsy-turvy now, for nearly all the families have at last agreed to go to Upper Canada in the care of the Northwesters. They promise us free land there, and peaceful surroundings. My father is greatly cast down over the turn things have taken, but he says the road to Upper Canada is the only safe road open to us now.

So in the morning, Donald, I go with my people to the new country. I am all atremble with the thought of it, but as father says, it is the only way. I believe they would kill us if we stay here. All through last night the Indians chanted songs close to my window, and shots were fired the whole night through. We have no leaders now. Poor Captain Macdonell was put in irons and has been taken away to Fort William by Duncan Cameron. He did his best to keep us together, but gave himself up at last because he feared that further resistance on his part would bring about

the destruction of the colony. My father, I know, advised him to give up. The settlement has been harassed, day and night, by Indians and half-breeds. Our horses have been killed. Father found poor faithful old Prince lying dead on the river-bank this morning, an arrow in his heart. The Irish redemptioners have joined hands with the Northwesters in the camp at Frog Plain. Another man called MacKenzie arrived three days ago with armed half-breeds at his back. They came, we are told, from Fort William. Nearly all our crops are destroyed. They ride over them at night and trample them into the ground. And three nights ago, Fort Douglas and the mill and stables were burned to the ground. It was terrible.

I keep wondering if we will really meet you on the river, Donald, but I will not ask questions of Campbell. He acts as if he knows where you are, but is content to let rumours travel. And there is your poor mother. She will not move away with us. She is so sure that you will come for her. But indeed her rheumatism is so bad now that she could never stand the long journey before us. They say it is fourteen hundred miles long. It seems such a long way.

O, Donald, I wish I could speak to you before I go. Indeed, I have thought so often lately that I have been a selfish girl. I should have consented to our marriage. Then we would be together to-night, and I would not be so feared and distracted. I am ashamed of my weakness. The least excitement makes me cry now. It is strange, but something tells me that you are thinking of me to-night. I know, dear Donald, that wherever you may be, you are doing what is best

for us who love you. So I will wait and pray for you, and when you come for me, I will be ready.

I hear my father praying. He is asking God to shield us all. I, too, will pray to-night, my Donald, and God will surely listen, and make us smile again. Good night, my brave and dear boy. My heart is in your keeping, and I will wait in patience for the day when you will come to me again. I know you will come. *Beannachd leat, m'eudail.*

BESSIE.

Had the earth collapsed under my feet, I had not been more stunned. Pushing my mother's comforting hand from my sleeve, I went out into the liquid morning sunlight, and hardly knowing what I did, walked to the little house that had, until the day before, sheltered my heart's desire. It was empty, but not as empty as the heart that beat against the little window through which I peered.

With leaden steps I turned homeward, and as my eyes rested on the river, I caught sight of a canoe, with a solitary figure in it, coming round the bend downby. Unthinkingly, I watched it, and presently I saw that its occupant was the huge Swampy Indian called Big John,—as handy a man, on the river or ashore, as ever wore a moccasin.

He held his paddle aloft in greeting as he came opposite me, and like a flash an idea came to my mind. Running to the water's edge I motioned to Big John to draw in. A minute later I was outlining a plan to him that tested his friendship for me and mine. But Big John had not forgotten the night when my mother

sat by the bedside of his young squaw, and though he said very little his black eyes gleamed as he sank his paddle and skimmed away. Within the hour his canoe pushed its nose into the river-bank opposite our door, and bidding my mother farewell, I took up my musket and a bag of victuals and climbed into Big John's canoe.

Fearful of suspicious eyes, I lay down in the bottom of the canoe until Big John, with easy strokes, had put the settlement behind us. Then I took to the paddling also. Hour after hour we kept the canoe at a swift gait.

Well on in the afternoon Big John's paddle trailed behind him. He pointed to a grassy clearing on our left, and towards this clearing we steered. Big John stepped ashore, pulled the nose of the canoe out of the water, and pointed to the muddy bank. It had been recently trampled by many feet; and grunting something in Cree, my dusky ally walked up the bank and stooped to examine the ashes of a camp fire.

"Three hours, maybe four," he grunted, as if reading from a book. "We sleep now. Paddle to-night."

I deemed it best to take his advice, so we had a bite to eat, slept under the trees for an hour or two, and in the cool of the evening took to the paddles again. The moon was at its brightest, and we sped along swiftly till at last we came into the forest of reeds that mark the entrance of the Red into Lake Winnipeg. We passed on into the lake, to find it whipped by a sharp breeze. The water became more and more angry as we pushed along the dark shore, tossing our canoe about so much that we had difficulty in making headway. The in-

creasing sweep of the shore-bound rollers made our position dangerous at last, so at a sign from Big John we swung the canoe round sharply and rode the rollers to the sandy beach. Further progress being impossible that night, we selected a sheltered spot and lay down to sleep.

At the break of day we were away again, for the wind had died down and the lake was as smooth as a pond. Three hours later the ugly mouth of Winnipeg River opened before us. At Fort Alexander we met a canoe heavily laden with an Indian family, and Big John learned from them that the Nor'West flotilla had passed up the river two hours earlier.

It must have been near noon when, rounding a rocky bend, we caught sight of the labouring flotilla. My plans had been long laid; so with a motion to Big John we thrust the canoe into midstream and set out boldly to overtake the pilgrims. We were soon observed, and the paddlers in the hindmost Nor'West canoes waited for us.

"What brings you here, Stewart?" cried Duncan Cameron suspiciously, as our canoes drew together.

"The same reason that brought you, Cameron," I replied, trying hard to keep the edge from my words.

The Nor'wester eyed me closely, but he said nothing, for the people from the Forks were shouting to me. But I heard but one voice, and saw but one face, in that throng. With a single sweep of my paddle I brought my canoe alongside the one in which my beloved lass sat, and there, in full view of forty families, our lips met. Not a word did Bessie utter, but turning her head slowly she met the covert gaze of George Campbell, and

the scorn in her eyes made the other cringe. Whereat, to hide his confusion, he made a great show of ordering the paddlers to proceed, lunging wildly at the water in his effort to put distance between himself and Bessie. My lass, at a glance from me, stepped lightly into our canoe, and so, as if nothing had happened out of the ordinary, we moved upstream towards Upper Canada.

Truth to tell, I assumed a light-hearted manner, talking freely to those about me about Upper Canada and the opportunities that awaited us there. Once, as I spoke thus, I got a curious look from Andrew MacBeath; and at another time the blood went tingling into my ears as I overheard the women folks clattering about my mother. Indeed the gossip of the old women became more and more careless as the day sped, till at last, at a quiet word from Bessie, we fell to the rear of the flotilla. Then, in a low voice, I poured my plans into Bessie's ears.

"Say you will come with me, Bess," I pleaded. "We will be wed to-night. Your father can declare the marriage before witnesses."

Yet Bessie would not give me an answer, thinking, as I guessed, of her father and mother. But I urged her anew, telling her that her people were among relations and friends, and safely bound for a settled country. So, in the end I had my way with her, as men have ever had their way with the women that love them. Yet the sight of her brimming eyes and trembling lips sobered me, and put disquieting thoughts in my mind.

In the late afternoon we got into rapid water,—the tail end of a swift and dangerous canyon that roared dully in the woods ahead. At a signal from Cameron

the canoes were put to shore, and a long and tiring portage was made over a faintly marked, tortuous path. When we came once more to the edge of placid water, the sun had gone far down on the Western horizon and the old folks, weary and footsore, were loud in their complaints against Cameron's fatiguing haste. (I heard years later that the Nor'westers became less and less considerate of the settlers as the long journey to Upper Canada continued.) Cameron ordered a stop for the night, and so, with the dismal music of the rapids in our ears, we made camp. Bessie had now joined her father and mother. I could see them sitting close together, and once, when Bessie's head fell against her mother's shoulder, my heart sickened within me, and I was minded to give up my mad enterprise there and then. The feeling came over me so strongly that I rose to my feet, but before I could summon enough resolution to walk over to Bessie and set her free, her father came to me and gripped my hand.

"The lassie has told us, Donald," he said quietly. "I will not be standing in the way. You are young, *'ille*, but I am not forgetting your father." He stooped over me, and fixing his eye sternly upon mine, said softly: "Mind ye, Donald, she is all we have. Cherish her, lad, all your days, and God's blessings will fall upon you both."

With that he took me by the hand, as one would take the hand of a child, and led me to his wife and daughter. We sat together, saying little, till the moon had bathed the forest and river in a white light. Then Big John came out of the trees and touched me on the shoulder. James Sutherland rose then, a Bible in his

hand. It was all over in a few minutes. The ring I put on Bessie's finger was her mother's; the document that proclaimed us man and wife bore a huge cross,—the mark of Big John. In a dream I heard James Sutherland say: "It will hold before all men and it is good in the sight of God." Then followed hurried embraces, and sounds of women's sobs, and the next thing I remember I was running, hand in hand with my wife, towards the river. The canoe lay ready for us, and James Sutherland lifted his daughter into it and pushed us out into the stream.

We had not gone ten yards when a challenging voice broke the stillness of the night. Our leave-taking had been noticed. The camp was quickly stirring. I could see men running towards the river, and after a few minutes angry voices called upon us to stop. Then I heard Cameron bellowing: "Man a boat and bring the thieving rascals back." With this my mind cleared and set itself briskly to the business before us. The sound of wood thumping on wood came to our ears.

"Oh, they're coming after us—five of them in Cameron's big canoe," cried Bessie. "I can see the muzzles of their muskets shining."

This was alarming news, but we drove our canoe at top speed and for a while seemed to be keeping our lead. A few minutes more and Bessie told us that they were gaining on us. Big John must have seen this, for as we came into the swift water that warned us of the seething rapids below, he let his paddle trail and looking backwards, seemed to ponder a moment. Then he took to the paddling again, speaking over his shoulder.

"They catch us on portage sure. Me, I know river like beaver. All time I take my squaw down rapids. Plenty noise, but me know bad water. I take you safe. Sit plenty tight."

Even as he spoke the voice of the canyon rose into the trees. The water began to ripple, and a hundred yards ahead the bounding rapids could be seen. A moment later their crackling roar came to our ears, and our canoe shivered as it entered the first broken water. A solid wall rose up before us, the canoe gave a lurch, and we had passed over the first glassy coil of the rapids. For another hundred yards the canoe was carried forward at breakneck speed, rising and falling dizzily as it shot downwards on the tempestuous current. Rocks flashed past us, spray flew into our faces and the roaring of the imprisoned waters filled our ears. Then came a sudden silence, and I saw that the canoe had settled to a giddy ride on fast but smooth water. Big John cried over his shoulder: "They not catch us now. Me know river. *Mithawashin!* (good)"

Nevertheless we pressed on all through that night. Lake Winnipeg lay tranquil in the moonlight, and as we sped down its irregular Eastern shore, my dear wife seemed to regain some of her gallant and happy spirit. The night was indeed beauteous. The silver beams of the moon flickered in the gently rippling water, and made a pretty picture of the white, boulder-strewn beach and its background of sleeping woods.

We put to shore just before dawn, made a fire among the rocks, and ate what was left of the food I had taken with me. Then Big John,—never was there a braver fellow,—made a soft and fragrant bed for Bessie

with spruce branches, shielding it cunningly with the canoe. With a thankful little sigh, for she was like to drop with weariness, Bessie nestled down on the couch, smiling sweetly at me as I tucked my blanket about her slender shoulders. She fell asleep immediately, and Big John and I put our backs to a warm boulder and dozed till the sun rose. Presently we were away again. In the evening I stepped ashore at the Colony, and led my sweetly-blushing bride to the sheltering arms of my mother.

CHAPTER XXIII

JOHN MAC LEOD DECIDES TO FIGHT!

PRECISELY three days later,—on the 25th of June,—a half-breed came to our door and silently handed me a letter. I opened it, and the following brief notice, signed by Cuthbert Grant, met my eyes:

"All settlers to retire immediately from Red River, and no trace of a settlement to remain."

I pondered the crude injunction, black rage seething in my heart. No more than thirteen families were left, and every one of them, I soon discovered, had received Cuthbert Grant's insolent and inhuman order. The men, mostly, were for obeying the injunction on account of their women and bairns. In truth, there seemed to be no other course that we could, with wisdom, pursue, for every day brought fresh proof that we were marked for extinction; the Metis, threatening and insulting, now hung about the remnant of the settlement like wolves scenting a killing. In spite of myself, I felt ill at ease, so, making a poor joke to Bessie about taking a honeymoon trip to Jack River, I made ready once more to leave the Forks.

In the middle of the same night I was wakened by Bessie. "There's somebody trying the door. Listen!" she whispered fearfully into my sleepy ears. At the

words I was stark awake, and raised myself on my elbow to listen. I could feel Bessie's heart beat against my back, and my own thumped as I heard a foot scrape at the door. Silently I slid out of bed and tiptoed on noiseless feet to the fireplace. My groping hand found what it sought,—my heavy musket. I knew it was not loaded, but when my hands closed on its cool barrel I felt better able to defend my door. Again I listened. Somebody was tapping cautiously on the door. "Who's there!" I cried, my voice sounding loud and unearthly in the sultry silence.

"Ssh! Keep your voice down, Donald," came a hoarse whisper from the other side of the door. "It's me, John MacLeod. Let me in."

There was no mistaking the voice of my good friend MacLeod, who had charge of the Company's trading at Red River. Greatly relieved, I put aside my musket, drew back the bolt in the door, and admitted my nocturnal visitor.

"Get a light, Donald," cried my wife from the bed.

"We had better do our talking in the dark," answered MacLeod. "I am being watched closely these days, and it will not do for me to be seen here, whatever. So bide in your warm bed, Mrs. Stewart."

MacLeod turned to me, and I could feel his quick hot breath in my ear.

"They think I'm still in the house overby," he whispered. "Grant has his men watching me. The skunk has his suspicions."

"But why should Grant be watching you?" I asked, for I began to think that the trader had been tipping the bottle too freely, and wished myself warm in bed

at Bessie's back. But MacLeod, by way of answer, cupped his hands over his mouth, and hissed in my ear:

"Well you may ask the question, Donald. I stand between them and the Company's stores, and by God! I will not be driven to Jack River. Here I stay, even if all the others go. Cuthbert Grant has yet to reckon with me, and he will get a bellyful before I am through with him."

"But this is the foolish talk," I replied. "You can do nothing. We are helpless,—a handful of old people against an army of savages. I have come to think, MacLeod, that they will slit our throats if we defy them further. We must take the prudent course,—no other. The women and bairns must be thought of."

MacLeod had no ear for my reasoning. "Let the old folks and the women and bairns go to Jack River," he retorted. "But I tell you, Donald, I am for fighting it out. It will never be said that Cuthbert Grant and his half-breeds drove John MacLeod out of this settlement."

I knew then that John MacLeod was indeed in his sober senses, and in grim earnest, I knew also that his desperate decision meant that he would meet his death at savage hands, and I was troubled in my mind, for we were friends. And as I pondered the matter, the trader poured his plans in my ears. He purposed fortifying the Company's blacksmith shop with a three-pounder cannon; with help he felt sure that he could defy Grant and his *Bois-brules* (half-breeds). It was a wild plan, yet as MacLeod dwelt upon it I began to cast sidelong glances towards my wife. At last I went

to her and we whispered together for a few minutes. What passed between us in the darkness that night is not a part of this tale. But this I will say, the dear girl that became my wife had the heart of a soldier. She bade me stay with MacLeod.

So I followed the trader out into the night, and we were soon safe inside the house that Peter Fidler built. Here I found Hugh McLean, Archibald Currie, and James MacIntosh,—all drinking copiously to the downfall of the Nor'westers.

MacLeod bade them put their rum away, and beckoned to us to follow him. He led us to the stable outby, and noiselessly we harnessed a sleepy horse and put him between the shafts of a cart that stood upended by the door. With a man at each wheel to quieten the clatter of the shaky axle, we made our way to the cannon. Gently the box of the cart was unlocked and tilted, and by mighty heaving we soon had the cannon on the sloping cart-bottom. A final heave, and the box of the cart swung back heavily to the shafts. In less time than it takes me to tell it, the loaded cart was backed into the doorway of the smithy, and the cannon unloaded and moved inside.

Just as John MacLeod was setting out for the stable with the horse and cart, a peculiar whistling note rent the silence of the night.

"Quick!" cried the trader hoarsely. "Help me to loose the horse."

Frantically, he sprang to the shafts, and in a moment the indifferent horse was free to find his own stall.

"Get inside and bolt the door," he shouted, half push-

ing us into the pitch dark smithy. He slammed the heavy door to and shot the bolts.

"Hush," he cautioned, "and you'll hear the whip-poor-will."

For a long time we stood in the dark with straining ears. Sure enough, the silence was broken again by a long, quavering whistle,—a clumsy imitation of a night bird's cry. Almost immediately it was answered by a shrill whistle from another direction. MacLeod now became talkative and cheerful, bidding us make ourselves comfortable.

"They've seen us," he chuckled, rubbing his hands together gleefully, "but they were not quick enough, whatever." Whistling a tune, he stepped to the bellows, and in a moment sparks were dancing on the fire. Two candles were lit, and to my astonishment I saw that we were in a rude fortress. Provisions enough to feed us for a year were stacked in a corner. Blankets were piled to the rafters. Scores of muskets, brand-new from London, were stacked against the walls. The small windows were barricaded with bags of meal, piled one on top of the other. Three kegs of powder stood in the corner furthest from the fire. MacLeod noted my astonishment with great pride.

"Just be making yourselves comfortable," he repeated, waving his hand in the direction of the stores. "There's a thousand pounds worth of the Company's merchandise there,—at London prices. I'm thinking that the lads with the painted faces will have a terrible fine time ere they lay their hands on that gear."

Then he became serious.

"They'll attack us in the morning," he said, "and if

we falter now we're as good as dead men. There's muskets here aplenty, but powder and shot is not so free. Shoot at close range,—and only when you can kill your man. I'll make the cannon vomit a dose that will skunner them."

Then he bade us lie down to sleep, telling us that he would keep watch till the break of day. But it was little sleep that came to any of us, for MacLeod kept hammering the anvil all through the night. In the early hours of the morning I awoke to find him asleep, but beside the cannon lay a pile of severed chain links. Truly, our cannon gave promise of vomiting forth a queer dose, and vomit it did, as we shall presently see.

The morning sun rose high in the sky, and yet there was no sign of an attack. Noon came, and passed. I began to tire of the monotony of our confinement, and doubts as to the wisdom of our plan began to assail me. About two o'clock, however, we heard a succession of shots, and rushing to our spy-holes, we saw a scattered crowd of *Bois-brules* approaching.

I counted seventy-eight of them. They leaned forward over the withers of their ponies, in the manner of men who fear sudden action, and when they neared our little fortress we could hear them chanting a war-song, and saw that they had painted their faces with vermilion and stove-polish.

With the noses of our muskets pointing through interstices in the thick log walls of the smithy, we awaited their onslaught. When about a hundred yards distant, they reined their ponies, and their leaders, Yellowhead MacDonald and Cuthbert Grant, drew apart

and conferred. Presently Grant wheeled his pony, raised his arm high, and rode slowly forward.

MacLeod, stripped to the waist, was ramming his broken chain links down the neck of the cannon, and urging us, as he laboured, to shoot the approaching horseman. But this I would not do, telling the sweating trader that it were better to hear Grant before shedding blood.

"Talk to him yourself, then," retorted MacLeod cheerily. "I will be doing my talking with the cannon."

Grant reined his pony when about twenty yards distant from our walls, and cried out commandingly: "Come outside and talk to me, MacLeod."

"We can talk with the wall between us, Cuthbert Grant," I replied.

The swaggering *Bois-brules* leader looked up quickly at the sound of my voice.

"How came you to be here, Stewart?" he cried.

"I am here to defend myself, Grant," I replied. "And if it be a fair question," I added, "what might you and Yellowhead be doing on the Company's property with a *speidh* like yon at your back?"

"I'll answer you, Stewart," shouted Grant, his violent temper getting the better of him. "I'm here to clear this place of meddlers, and Cuthbert Grant is not one to take half measures. Come out and surrender, or we will roast you out."

" 'Tis the brave talker you are, Grant," I retorted. "And 'tis the brave man you are, harrying old men and women with your painted savages. Coward and braggart, I have a mind to blow your brains out. Go back

to Yellowhead MacDonald and tell him that men are behind this wall. Tell your painted faces, rievers and vandals all, that we defy them."

Grant's reply was a foul curse, and lashing his pony savagely, he went streaking back to his followers. Waving his arms, he urged them towards our fortress. In a moment they came galloping up, sitting low over the withers of their mounts, and whooping fearsomely. At about gun-shot range they spread out fanwise and encircled our stronghold. Then they began to shoot, and the spatter of lead on the walls told us that we must indeed fight or die like rats.

Yet we held our fire, and as we watched the circling horseman a man ran out from the trading house towards them, and with my eye to the wall I watched him expostulating with some of the ruffians who were approaching the trading post. I saw a *Bois-brule* raise his gun quickly, and I was horrified to see a flash, and the man from the post falling forward on his face. So far as I could see, the man was foully murdered, for he was unarmed. Made bold by our silence, three of the *Bois-brules,* led by Grant, raced up to the door of the smithy and made frantic efforts to open it. But the heavy door was securely bolted, and stood unshaken before their savage rushes.

"Bring hay, and we'll roast them out," shouted Grant, and men slid from their ponies and ran to a mound of hay that stood near the stable. Bearing great armfuls of dry hay, the *Bois-brules* came running towards the smithy.

It was the signal for us to open fire. I took careful

aim. Bang! The smithy roared with our shooting, and when the smoke cleared we saw two *Bois-brules* lying on their faces, their arms full of hay.

Grant and Yellowhead were determined to oust us with fire, however, for upon their orders men dived into the hay mound again. To our dismay, we now saw that the two leaders were employing strategy in their efforts to overcome us, for some of their men carried hay towards the Company's Post while others watched their chance to get their fuel against our walls. It was a desperate situation!

"Stand back till I put a spoke in their wheel," shouted MacLeod; and as he spoke he jumped back on my toes, firing the cannon as he jumped. There was a terrific explosion. I was completely blinded by it, and my ear drums seemed to burst. The smithy was full of a dense, choking smoke, and when I recovered my sight I cried out to my companions that the smithy had been set afire.

"Not yet, Donald," shouted MacLeod triumphantly in my ear, and he drew my head down to a reeking spy-hole.

The cannon had vomited forth a wicked dose, even as the trader had promised it would, for my eye beheld a horrid sight. The Company's Post was still unscathed, but five *Bois-brules* lay dead in front of our fortress. A sixth, screaming hideously, was crawling towards his confederates, who now clustered round Grant at a safe distance.

The two *Bois-brules* leaders seemed to be arguing with their followers, for they crowded together, gesticulating angrily. After a while they seemed to settle their

differences, for they mounted their ponies, and paying no heed to their dead, rode away. We watched them ride among the abandoned homes of the settlers. They were out of range of our cannon now, and pillar after pillar of black smoke rose towards the sky as they retreated towards Fort Gibraltar.

Cautiously we opened the smithy door and stepped out into the sunlight, thankfully filling our lungs with fresh air. John MacLeod was soon turning the dead bodies over on their backs, and presently he gave a sharp exclamation that brought us to his side. The body that sprawled at his feet was that of John Warren, a Company's man of high standing.

"They have killed a true man," said MacLeod gravely. "May God forgive them for striking down a defenceless man who, to his last gasp, served the Company with courage and fidelity. But now let us bury John Warren's body decently."

So, with glances cast over our shoulders, we hurriedly digged shallow graves for the dead men, and laid them decently in them, covering the new earth deeply with hay so as to protect the bodies from night-prowling wolves. Then we went into the fortress again, and barricaded ourselves for the night. Anxiety sat heavier and heavier upon us as the long day waned, for well we knew that we would be sore put to prevent our attackers from setting fire to the smithy under cover of darkness.

It was decided that two of us would keep watch till midnight while the others slept. MacLeod, MacIntosh, and Currie lay down, and were soon fast asleep. There was no sign of life outside, but the night being black

as pitch, we had to trust to our ears for warnings of danger. The velvety silence was eerie, and more than once, when stupid with sleepiness, I started up with the feeling that moccasined feet were padding about the outside of our fortress. At other times I was sure that I heard the crackling of burning hay.

Well on towards midnight, the hour which we dreaded most, a great rumbling, as of carts approaching from the South, brought me to my feet. I sprang to a spy-hole and looked out.

Even as I did so, a sudden gust of warm wind moaned about the smithy, and the sky in the South was suddenly illuminated by sheet lightning. There followed a distant roll of thunder, and again the heavens were lit up. Every tree stood black and clear in the pale amber illumination.

I shouted to the sleepers, for now I saw a band of mounted men coming up the Colony road. Lightning now flickered almost constantly across the horizon, and we were able to observe the approaching riders with ease. They turned in from the road, and approached the smithy very cautiously. I stuck the muzzle of my musket through the wall and pulled the trigger.

"That will let them know we're expecting them," I whispered to MacLeod, and he nodded approvingly.

At the sound of the shot the riders drew off a little. They were holding a council of war, for their horses stood nose to nose.

Suddenly a blinding flash of lightning hissed its zigzag course across the black sky, to be instantly followed by a ripping outburst of thunder. The wind moaned outside, and the grass waved this way and that.

"They'll have to bestir themselves if they would be setting the smithy on fire to-night," cried MacLeod excitedly, as another flash of lightning rent the air with a sound like a flock of ducks flying fast. The *Bois-brules* still hesitated.

Rain began to fall from the shattered clouds. At first great drops spattered intermittently on the roof, but another flash of lightning opened wide the sluice-gates of the heavens, and down came the rain in streams, to an accompaniment of deafening crashes of thunder and wicked blue flashes of lightning. In a few minutes the water was dripping from a score of holes in the smithy roof, and we were kept busy trying to protect our gunpowder and stores from the invading water. Outside, nothing could be seen but a white curtain of rain. In half an hour the countryside was sheeted with water, and muddy streamlets were already trickling towards the river. Then, as suddenly as it had started, the storm died out, and coolness and quiet fell upon the earth once more.

"Now we can sleep out the night in peace," exclaimed MacLeod in tones of great thankfulness. "There will be no fire lit this night, and without fire the smithy is safe against all the *Bois-brules* between here and Athabasca. I'm thinking, moreover, that they have small stomach for another attack. The cannon was too much for them. They are keener for knife-play. But we'll see in the morning."

Our sleep was uninterrupted, and the sun was well up ere we woke. A glance through the spy-holes told us that the *Bois-brules* had gone, and so we moved cautiously about outside, tending the Company's neg-

lected livestock. All day we watched carefully for the return of the Nor'westers, but there was no sign of them.

As the sun was going down an Indian came to the trading post for tobacco, and from him we learned that the *Bois-brules* had gone westwards towards their own territory at Qu'Appelle. This was good news. Pressed for further information, the old Indian informed us that the families had gone to Jack River. There was no surprise at the receipt of this news, but suddenly MacLeod, who acted as interpreter, jumped to his feet with an exultant cry.

"He says King George's men have gone after them," he cried. "Do you hear me say it, men? The Earl's men must be here at last! There's life in the colony yet!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RETURN OF THE BOIS-BRULES

HERE was stupendous news! Could it be possible that the Earl's fighting men had arrived from Upper Canada? Vague rumours of the Earl's activities had reached us; the men who refused to go to Upper Canada with the Northwesters had always held that Lord Selkirk would come to his settlement with soldiers at his back. Now it seemed that this faith had been justified. Yet we who held the smithy could find nothing to corroborate the news that the Indian brought. We were alone in the settlement, and kept close to our fortress.

Still, we were left alone. We saw no signs of the Nor'westers, and more significant still, the river was free of traffic. As the days passed, it became evident that we were not marked for immediate attack, so we set about restoring the blasted colony, cutting and stacking hay for the absent settlers, building their houses anew, and repairing their trampled fences. MacLeod was on good terms with the freemen, and with their help we accomplished much in the month that followed.

Never have I seen the like of the confidence that animated MacLeod during this period; the man was so sure that the settlement would be re-established that he set about building a Governor's residence. Truth

to tell, I would have taken to the river had it not been that his faith and industry held me in check, for I was beside myself with anxiety concerning Bessie and my mother. Indeed, I owe much, and this settlement owes much, to John MacLeod. For he it was who, by faith and great daring, beat back the *Bois-brules* at the last weary ditch.

"They will be back, Donald," he used to say when my spirits were at low ebb. "God Almighty wills it that this settlement will live. Look at the grass waving yonder,—hundreds of thousands of square miles of it. The traders will never hold it. They will be back, Donald. They will be back."

And even as MacLeod predicted, the settlers came back. The Indians brought the first word of them; they had seen them coming down Lake Winnipeg. At last and long we sighted them coming round the bend in the river downby, and heard the cheery chant of Robertson's voyageurs:

Far, far they're borne to distant lands,
En roulant ma boule
Till gathered by fair maidens' hands,
En roulant ma boule
Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule.

On they came, and as the first canoe touched the mud at the river's edge I waded out into the water and took my dear wife in my arms.

"Hush, *m'eudail* (my dear). You are safe. The trouble is over," I whispered, for she shook like a leaf in my arms and wept silently. Indeed there were few

eyes that were not wet that day; for the folk had gone through much, and were perilously near the breaking point. Their spirits revived when we told them the news; and we in turn were elated to discover that they had been overtaken at Jack River by Colin Robertson.

The gallant fellow had been sent from Montreal by Lord Selkirk, and finding the settlement deserted, he had led his men on to Jack River. Here, as I say, he overtook the discouraged remnant of the Colony. They had been ill-used, and some of them were determined to proceed to Fort York, in the hope of getting back to Scotland. Only by taking a stern attitude was Robertson able to bring them back.

We led them to the trading post, where a rude banquet had been prepared to celebrate their return. With his own hands John MacLeod poured coggies of good rum for everybody, telling and retelling the story of our stand against the *Bois-brules*. Passing freemen stopped to gaze at the now bustling trading post, and padded away hurriedly as Duncan MacDonald, full of good mutton ham and rum, and with a kingly port, paced slowly back and forth before the door of the post playing "The Glen Is Mine." Women hummed the old tune as they busied themselves once more about their own hearthstones, and the old men straightened their weary backs and muttered in Gaelic as the prideful notes of the *piobaireachd* skirled up and down the quiet river till at last, faint but defiant, they assaulted the walls of Fort Gibraltar upby. The settlement, Phœnix-like, had risen from its very ashes.

Summer gave way to autumn. Crops were garnered

and stored for the winter. The *Bois-brules* remained on the plains. The Nor'westers kept close to their Fort.

A strange tension, born of a feeling of false security, marked the existence of the settlement. During this period I was much in the company of Colin Robertson, and to me he voiced his anxieties. On the last night of October he summoned me to Fort Douglas, and when I entered his private quarters I discovered him deep in conversation with a stranger of striking appearance.

At my entrance Robertson presented me to the stranger, and for a long moment I gazed with admiring eyes at the commanding figure of Jean Baptiste Lagimoniere. Even in his moccasins, his height equalled my own, and he was high-chested, broad, and straight as a withie. A pair of blue eyes, pale but piercing, gleamed steadily above a hawk-like nose. The resolute jaw and sensitive mouth were but ill-concealed by the short, glossy beard that gave an added maturity to his fresh face. He wore a suit of ruddy deer-skins that marked him for what he was,—a trapper and *courier de bois*.

Robertson closed the door and shot the bolts, and returning to the fire, began to speak in a tense but restrained voice.

"There is greater need than ever to get word to the Earl, Stewart. Lagimoniere brings word of trouble a-brewing out on the plains. Word must be taken to Montreal."

"To Montreal!" I exclaimed. "It is near two thousand miles to Montreal, and every route watched by Nor'westers."

"Eet ees not too late, M'sieu Stewart," commented

the runner quietly. "Eef eet must be, I will go to Montreal."

"Lagimoniere is the only man who could carry the message," exclaimed Robertson earnestly. "We can trust him, and there is not his like as a runner between the Rocky Mountains and Montreal."

"But the distance," I repeated. "Two thousand miles, is it not? Two thousand miles of hardship and danger. You would be shot like a dog, Monsieur, before you reached Fort William."

The *courier de bois* shrugged his shoulders.

"Eet ees nothing for me, non!" he said simply. "Who can overtake Lagimoniere in the woods? Pouf! I pass the clumsy dogs like the wind—silent! Non! For me eet ees nothing much. I think only of *ma femme*. She will be alone so long, and there ees danger here. Eet ees not good for her to be here alone."

Robertson stepped closer to Lagimoniere, and put a hand on his shoulder.

"As God is my witness, Monsieur," he said gravely, "I will defend your wife and children with my life. They will be brought to the Fort and honourably cared for until you come back. Have no fears about them. Will you carry the message?"

"Si je puis!" replied the runner calmly, crossing himself quickly. "Give me the letter, and I leave now. When daylight come, I will be near Pembina. Eef questions are asked, Lagimoniere has gone on a hunting trip."

Robertson seized a letter that lay on the table, sealed it carefully at the fire, and handed it to the waiting runner.

In another minute Jean Baptiste Lagimoniere, bound for Montreal, faded like a shadow into the darkness.

For a long time Robertson sat silent before the crackling fire. At length he cracked his pipe sharply on the grate, and rising to his feet exclaimed:

"Yon was a man, Stewart! A man on a man's errand!"

I nodded, and departed homewards.

Late in the year Robert Semple of Boston, the new Governor selected by Lord Selkirk, arrived at the settlement at the head of another contingent of settlers.

Our new Governor soon showed his mettle. Before he had been a month in the settlement he ordered the seizure of Fort Gibraltar, and in short order the stronghold of the Nor'westers was taken, and Duncan Cameron put in irons. The crafty Nor'wester, however, promised to keep the peace, whereupon he was given his liberty and the command of his Fort.

The supineness of the Nor'westers at this time was noteworthy; it did not accord with their customary ruthlessness. Those of us who had reason to know them remarked the fact in the hearing of the Governor, but he scented no mischief. For Cameron he expressed profound contempt. Thus, at the very beginning of his régime, Governor Semple displayed his fatal weakness,—a curious compound of excessive confidence, obstinacy, and contempt for the enemies of Lord Selkirk. He had no patience with the minions of the North-West Company, and scant respect for their prowess. In his eyes they were poachers pure and simple,—to be dealt with summarily as poachers. The

portentous drama being enacted on the banks of the Red River had developed to the stage where the need for conciliatory measures on the part of Lord Selkirk's agents was desperate. A giant, the creature of those stark men of Montreal, stood at bay, and those of us who had felt its teeth knew well that it would fight, and that savagely, ere it expired. But if any such thought passed through the mind of Governor Semple, he gave no outward sign of it. Austere and self-contained, he sought no man's counsel.

Black clouds began to gather on the horizon. News of fighting between the men of far-flung rival forts filtered through to the settlement. Peguis, the Saulteaux Chief, warned the Governor that the Metis were seething with hostility towards the colony. Colin Robertson blamed Duncan Cameron for fomenting the ill-feeling, and urged Governor Semple to retake Fort Gibraltar. The stern, suppressive course was ever favoured by the Governor; and so, in April, the stronghold of the Northwesters was assaulted and garrisoned by our soldiers; Cameron, its evil genius, was put in irons and sent to England for trial before a judge and jury.

There were those who lauded these stern activities of Governor Semple. For myself, I kept my tongue in check while praying inwardly that the Earl would appear on the scene in time to pour oil on the troubled waters. Only once did I offer a protest against the Governor's high-handedness. It came on the heels of his decision to tear down Fort Gibraltar. I feared the consequences of such an act, and with Robertson backing me up, laid my objections before Governor Semple. I might better have saved my breath, for the Gov-

ernor grew as cold as ice towards me and, as I thought, none too civil towards Robertson, over whom he exercised direct authority.

So, no sooner had Robertson set out for Fort York with his prisoner Cameron than the Governor, with that fatal stubbornness that was to cost him so dearly, set out with thirty men for Gibraltar. In less than a week the Northwest Fort was completely demolished, the material in it being used to complete Fort Douglas.

But the military ardour of our Governor was yet to lead him to commit greater blunders.

Pembina House, against which the settlers had no just complaint, was captured by the Governor, and its occupants hustled as prisoners to Fort Douglas. I prayed anew for the early appearance of Lord Selkirk, for signs of an impending catastrophe were to be seen on every hand. The Northwesters kept their claws sheathed,—an ominous thing! The Indians avoided the settlement. The free-traders, followed by their wives and half-breed children, slipped silently away into the Western plains. The men of the settlement stayed close to their own doors. Round the fires of far-flung camps men with dusky faces chanted war-songs and fondled weapons.

But, though our minds were uneasy, we upheld the Governor stoutly. Indeed, there was no other course for us now,—for the Governor, by intercepting messengers of the Northwesters, had given us proof that the colony was to be attacked. The reason for the apparent meekness of the Northwestern at Fort Gibraltar was now disclosed; the master-minds of Montreal

were focused on the growing settlement; the plan for its complete destruction was in their hands.

The first blow was struck by our enemies. The *Bois-brules,* led by Cuthbert Grant, overpowered Lieutenant Pambrum, a servant of the Company, at Fort Qu'Appelle, as he was bringing supplies down the Assiniboine River to Fort Douglas. A very decent, quiet-spoken man was Pambrum, and from him, after we became friends, I learned much concerning the plans that filled the brain of Cuthbert Grant at that time. Pambrum was kept a prisoner for near a week, and during that time, he told me, Grant used to strut about in front of him, cursing the English and boasting that he and his *Bois-brules* would govern Rupert's Land. According to Pambrum, the *Bois-brules'* leader was completely obsessed with the crazy idea of establishing a new nation, of which he would be the dictator. I, Donald Stewart, now write this down, for although I have never defended the arbitrary actions of Captain Semple, yet I do know, from the fireside talks I had with Lieutenant Pambrum, that, sooner or later, Upper Canada would have had to reckon with Cuthbert Grant. So it may indeed be that Governor Semple was predestined to play the sad part that he did in the history of this country.

Pambrum was brought East by Grant, and concerning his experiences he shall tell his own story,—a story that I have heard so often that I know every word of it by heart.

"I was treated civilly enough," said Pambrum, "and my worst affliction was the eternal boasting of Grant and the French war songs that the *Bois-brules* were for-

ever chanting. However, nothing of any account happened till we came upon a band of Cree Indians one evening. The *Bois-brules* immediately mingled with the Indians, urging them to fall in behind Grant. But the Crees sat stolidly by their camp fires. Yellowhead MacDonald decided to try his hand with them, and he approached the Cree Chief with an oily smile and made them a speech.

" 'My friends and relations,' says he, 'I address you in bashfulness, for I have not a pipe of tobacco to offer you. The English have been spoiling the land that belongs to you and the *Bois-brules*. Have they not driven away the buffalo? My friends, you will be poor and miserable if the English stay. But we will drive them away from your hunting-grounds, for the North-West Company and the *Bois-brules* are one.'

"There was more of this palaver from Yellowhead, and then he requested the Crees to join his eastbound warriors.

"The Cree Chief got to his feet and told Yellowhead that the Crees were friends of King George's men, and would not follow the banner of the *Bois-brules*. Yellowhead fumed and swore and threatened, but the old Cree Chief stood his ground,—and the woods behind him were alive with his young men. So the cavalcade proceeded. Down past Brandon House it came, gathering recruits as a rolling snowball gathers snow, and so on East along the Portage trail. It was on the 19th of June that the swollen cavalcade came to a halt at Catfish Creek, four miles Northeast of Fort Douglas. They expected to hold a council of war here with the Northwesters who, in accordance with plans laid at

Montreal, had been sent from Fort William to join the *Bois-brules* in a merciless attack upon the settlement."

That is the story of the coming of the *Bois-brules*. What followed their coming is another story, and I shall tell it myself.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MASSACRE OF SEVEN OAKS

I WAS mending a fence at the back of the house when they brought word of the coming of the half-breeds. Little Donald Bannerman, pop-eyed and peching, came flying over the garden to me, crying as he came: "They're coming, Stewart Mhor! They're coming to the settlement. The Governor wants you at the Fort!" Having delivered his message, the little fellow, he was no more than ten years old, burst into tears, and edging close to me, put his hot little hand in mine. I took him to the house, put my musket under my arm, and with a light word to Bess, set out for Fort Douglas.

At the Fort I met Burke, the Company clerk, as he came running in from the plains. Looking past him, I saw a knot of men about half a mile away. Their muskets glinted brightly as they caught the slanting rays of the sinking sun.

"Join them as fast as you can, Stewart," panted Burke, pointing to the group at which I gazed. "The half-breeds are on the rampage. Hell has broken loose. The Governor sent me back for a cannon. I'll follow up with it." He raced on, shouting for men to help him, and I started running towards the Governor's little party. As I ran I passed white-faced women

and crying bairns as they fled towards the Fort, and they cried out to me that the *Bois-brules* were bearing down upon the settlement further down the river.

At last I came up on the Governor and his followers, and then I saw the *Bois-brules*. They were moving away from us towards the river. A cloud of dust rose from the feet of their horses as, chanting a war-song, they bore down upon the helpless settlers by the river.

Captain Semple, spy-glass in hand, turned from an inspection of the half-breeds and looked long in the direction of the Fort. The poor Governor was in a quandary. There were the *Bois-brules*, well-mounted, well-armed, and outnumbering us ten to one, advancing threateningly upon the settlers; behind us there was no sign of Burke and his reinforcements. With a final despairing look towards the Fort, the Governor turned towards us.

"I think we had better follow on, Gentlemen," he said quietly. "We can accomplish nothing by standing here. Spread out as you advance."

We moved forward at his bidding. Before we had travelled three hundred yards, however, the half-breeds turned to face us, and as we proceeded slowly towards them, they ceased their chanting and started back to meet us, spreading out fanwise as they came. In ten minutes they had almost completely surrounded us, and as they drew in close I saw that they were painted most hideously. It came upon me then that we were in deadly peril, and with a strange gripping feeling at my heart, I moved as quickly as I could to the Governor's side. Even as I did so, a black, thickset Frenchman left the ranks of the *Bois-brules* and rode towards

us, holding up his right hand as if to command a hearing.

"You! What you want, eh?" he shouted as he came within speaking distance.

"What do *you* want?" retorted the Governor sharply, looking the Frenchman sternly in the eye.

"We want our Fort," shouted the Frenchman angrily, and as he spoke he rode boldly forward till his horse almost brushed the grim-mouthed Governor.

"Go to your Fort, then," snapped the Governor, his eyes flashing angrily.

The Frenchman, crazed by the taunt, twisted suddenly in his saddle, and with an exclamation in French, swung his musket at Governor Semple. Quick as a flash, however, the Governor caught hold of the barrel. There was a flash and a roar as the Frenchman's musket went off. I heard a sudden gasping cry behind me, and glancing backwards I saw Lieutenant Holte writhing on the grass.

Before I could move a hand to defend myself, the half-breeds began to fire their muskets at us, and bullets whistled through the air. I could hear the Governor shouting, but all was noise and confusion, and bending low I darted to an oak tree that stood near me, and threw myself flat on the ground behind it. Pushing my musket forward, I raised my head very cautiously and peered along the barrel. The *Bois-brules,* yelling like demons, were spurring their ponies in all directions.

About thirty yards to my left I saw a man rise from the ground as a mounted *Bois-brule* bore down upon him. Who the man was I never knew, for the twilight

was deepening into darkness even then, but he raised his musket to his shoulder and answered his assailant's fire. The murderous half-breed threw his musket into the air and toppled over his horse's neck. The man who brought him down bent over his smoking musket. Suddenly his head went back with a jerk, and dropping his musket he spun slowly round and fell forward heavily on his face. A whooping *Bois-brule* slid from his horse, and drawing a knife from his belt, ran towards the convulsing body. It was Perrault the tracker! Hardly conscious of what I was doing, I pulled the trigger of my musket. When the smoke cleared away I saw the body of the deserter sprawling over the dead body of a better man. So much of the massacre I saw clearly; the rest is a blur, for a score of desperate hand-to-hand fights were waged simultaneously, and the groans of dying men mingled with the savage, exultant shouts of the bloodthirsty invaders. The men from the Fort, scattered as they were among their mounted antagonists, were doomed. Each man fought dourly for his life, but the butchers were quick at the killing. Fortune had so far favoured me, for I had thrown myself into a depression formed by the pawing feet of a fly-pestered buffalo, and in the turmoil I escaped notice.

As I lay there, scarce daring to breathe, the sound of a familiar voice came to my ears. Cautiously I raised my head. There, about twenty yards away, I saw Captain Rodgers rising from the ground. By some strange chance, he had, like me, escaped the notice of the half-breeds. He seemed to be bent on making a race for his life, for he crouched low like a runner, casting swift, calculating glances in the direction of the

Fort. The *Bois-brules* saw him as soon as he stood up, and three or four of them made for him, shouting as they ran. Then I heard a quavering voice cry out: "Give yourself up, Rodgers! For God's sake give yourself up!"

Poor Rodgers threw down his musket, and holding his hands above his head, walked towards the swiftly-approaching *Bois-brules,* crying out to them, first in English and then in the French, that he surrendered. He came to a standstill in front of the foremost *Bois-brule,* repeating very calmly: "I surrender." For answer the *Bois-brule* put his musket to the Captain's ear and pulled the trigger. In this shocking manner Captain Rodgers of Fort Douglas met his death, and ere his dead body had struck the earth another villainous half-breed was upon it, with a knife, slashing and stabbing like a maniac.

While this horrible scene was being enacted, I caught a glimpse of John Pritchard standing in the midst of a group of howling *Bois-brules,* and I could hear him pleading for his life. The *Bois-brule* who shot Rodgers strode up to him, and swung his musket as if to dash Pritchard's brains out. Thereupon a dozen *Bois-brules* rushed upon Pritchard, and he went down among them. I could hear the thumps of their muskets on the poor fellow's body. In the midst of the mêlée a tall, powerfully built *Bois-brule* threw himself furiously upon the writhing group, hurling Pritchard's assailants away. Shielding the terrified Pritchard with his body, he harangued his compatriots in the French, waving his arms and flashing his white teeth. What he said I know not,

but the *Bois-brules* fell back grudgingly and Pritchard was led away towards Frog Plain.

Again I flattened myself behind my tree, my face pressed into the grass. After a while I heard voices behind me, and a moment later the ground shook with the footfalls of running men. There was a sudden yell above me, and before I could rise to my knees the barrel of a musket was pressed hard into the back of my neck. I shut my eyes and held my body taut, steeling myself for the explosion that would hurl me into eternity.

A hundred pictures flickered through my mind during that awful moment. Then I became aware that the musket-barrel no longer pressed my neck. Before I could raise my head, I received a terrific clout between my shoulder blades, and as I rolled over with the sudden agony of the blow, half a dozen *Bois-brules* fell upon me, mingling their blows with curses. One, more murderous than the others, danced around me, brandishing a long knife. I thought I was done for, for a dozen arms were wrapped about me; but in the nick of time a powerful savage stepped forward, caught my assailant's wrist, and ordered the others to release me.

Cuthbert Grant stood before me, his small eyes glinting cruelly through the red paint that he had smeared his face with. For a moment we held each other's eyes. I knew then that Grant had plans of his own concerning me.

"There's no wall between us to-night, Stewart," said the *Bois-brule* leader sneeringly.

" 'Tis so, Cuthbert Grant," I replied, and unable to

control my deep and abiding hatred of the man, I added foolishly: "But you have plenty of men at your back again, whatever."

"You dog!" he snarled, advancing towards me, his hands opening and closing with the passion that rode him.

"I have a mind to finish you now."

He thought better of it, however, and turning his back to me, jabbered in French to his men. One of them ran to his pony, came back with a piece of rope, and in the twinkling of an eye my hands were cruelly tied behind my back. At Grant's sharp command, I was led away towards Frog Plain. The *Bois-brules'* leader walked behind me, and as we passed the dead and mutilated bodies of the men who had gone out from the Fort earlier in the evening, he boasted loudly about the great victory that was his. Reckoned in blood, it was a victory sure enough, for the bodies of a score of our men lay about me, and the blood near froze in my veins as I saw the painted assassins, insensate with the blood-lust, slashing at the dead bodies like ghouls among carrion. As we moved towards the river, one of my guards, with an animal snarl, sprang from my side towards a groaning, shuddering figure that lay in the grass. The death-rattle was sounding in the fallen man's throat; already his clammy face was tinged with yellow, or so it seemed to me as I gazed, in horror and pity, at the dreadful spectacle. Noting my look, the Metis gave a fiendish yell, and brandishing a gleaming knife, threw himself upon the expiring man. Thrice he slashed, and rising to his feet, dashed a gory, quivering mass at my feet. The grisly thing rolled in the dry

grass, picking up a coating that gave it the hideous aspect of a giant water-slug in an armour of pebbles and twigs.

Horror gripped me so suddenly that I could scarce draw my breath.

Cuthbert Grant kicked the gruesome thing into the long grass and uttered a short laugh.

"You see, Stewart," he snarled, "what things have come to."

I looked at him without answering, and infuriated by my silent scrutiny, he sprang at me and struck me heavily on the mouth. "Take that," he hissed. "And keep clear of Deschamps here," he went on, inclining his head towards the fiend who had committed the outrage upon the dying man. "Keep clear of him, Stewart, or your tongue will be in danger before this night is through."

Thus, sick with horror and grief, and with blood trickling from my split lips, I went forward with my captors till at length we came upon Governor Semple.

The poor man raised himself up on his elbow when he saw us, and cried weakly: "Cuthbert Grant, I appeal to your humanity. I am badly wounded. My thigh is broken, and I will bleed to death if I am left here overnight. I ask you to have me carried to my Fort, where I can get attention. God knows you have shed enough blood this day without leaving me here to die like a dog."

Grant looked down at the helpless Governor, and seemed undecided as to his course of action. But if he felt any pity for Governor Semple, it was for a moment only.

"I can do nothing for you now," he muttered. "I have other things to attend to, but I will leave this man with you"—he indicated a leering French half-breed who stood beside him—"and I will send another man back to help carry you to your cursed Fort."

I stepped quickly forward and knelt down beside the Governor. He was weeping silently, and my own eyes filled with tears as he reached up and put his hand on my shoulder.

"God help me, Stewart," he said in a weak and broken voice. Then, with a quick movement, he drew my head down and whispered. "Make your escape, Stewart, and see to it that this day's work is avenged. Get word to the Earl . . ."

I heard no more, for my captors dragged me roughly away. We had not gone twenty yards when a shot sounded behind us, and looking back, I saw Governor Semple turn slowly over on his back, wave his arms slowly as a man will when he wakes out of a deep sleep, and collapse. Bending over him, with a smoking musket in his hands, stood the French half-breed.

CHAPTER XXVI

A MIDNIGHT SWIM

CUTHBERT GRANT'S eyes met mine. "God! but you will be paying dearly for that foul crime, Cuthbert Grant," I cried bitterly. "You have murdered a great man. Babes unborn will scorn your name for the hand you have taken in this day's work."

"Keep your tongue quiet," snarled Grant, and he sprang at me and struck me savagely again. "Who are you to talk about babes unborn? Before this night is done, your tongue will be shortened."

Then, like a man in liquor, he began to boast of his murderous ongoings. All the way to the *Bois-brule* camp at Frog Plain he kept up his tirade. "Do you know how many of our patriots were killed over there?" he asked me.

"Patriots!" I repeated, trying to keep the scorn out of my voice.

"Yes, Patriots," he retorted. "Patriots of the New Nation, the Nation that will sweep the English vermin out of this country. You have seen how we fight, Stewart. We are not afraid to kill. The brave *Bois-brules* give no quarter. We lost two men,—two only. Where are your brave soldiers? Sacré! The coyotes will have their fill of them to-night. You think you are lucky, eh? Well, you will see. Cuthbert Grant has his own

way of making his prisoners dance. Sulky dog! I will loosen your tongue with a hot iron to-night. Before I am through with you, Stewart, you will see Fort Douglas in my hands. We will attack to-night, and if a finger is lifted against us, we will kill every man, woman, and child in your cursed settlement."

He raved on in this bloodthirsty manner until we reached the *Bois-brules'* camp. Here we came upon John Pritchard, who *fleeched* (begged) before Grant in a most pitiable way. At last, in his desperation, Pritchard promised Grant that if he was freed he would induce the people at the Fort to surrender. Thereupon Pritchard was released, and Grant's sneering laugh followed him as he sped away to safety.

As for me, I was backed roughly against the wheel of a cart, and my hands were lashed to a spoke. There Grant left me, telling me that he would come for me later on in the night.

The victorious *Bois-brules* were rejoicing round their camp fires, and while the feasting went on I was forgotten. But I knew well what Cuthbert Grant had in store for me; so keeping my eye on a sentinel who lolled on the grass near by, I tried my strength against the ropes that bound me to the cart. After some cautious pulling and twisting, my wrists loosened, and quickly my fingers sought the knot that held me to the wheel. It was the work of a moment to untie it. Still keeping my back to the cart, I tried to slip one of my hands through the rope that bound my wrists together. A bitter task it was, but at last one hand slipped free of the rope. Cautiously I looked about me. The sentinel had risen to his feet, and had moved nearer the camp

fires, round which the *Bois-brules* were marching, chanting their songs. Suddenly I heard my name shouted above the tumult, and a moment later some men came running across the firelight in my direction.

I waited no longer. Bending low, I sprinted off into the darkness, heading for the river. Unfortunately for me, the camp fires diluted the blackness of the night over a considerable area, and my dash for liberty was plainly seen by the approaching *Bois-brules*. Luckily for me, however, they had come for me unarmed, and I had faded into the outer darkness ere a musket could be pointed at me. But their wild shouts instantly roused the camp, and out of the corner of my eye I saw a score of *Bois-brules* racing through the firelight after me. Muskets flashed and roared behind me, and once my legs were spattered with dirt as a stray shot, luckily aimed, found its target uncommonly near my flying heels. Behind me, and not so far behind me at that, I could hear the sharp, eager exclamations of my pursuers.

I had thrown caution to the wind, staking everything on being able to reach the river ahead of my pursuers. The dry leaves and twigs crashed under my flying feet, the telltale sounds guiding those that hunted me, for as I ran I could hear the sputter of bullets among the dry leaves. Tall black pillars suddenly appeared before me, and a moment later I sprawled headlong into the dense undergrowth that fringes the river bank where the family of giant cottonwoods stand brooding to this day.

If you walk through that silent jungle to-day, you will come across a ragged ditch,—dug by the waters

that rush noisily down to the river when the ice is going out in the spring. It was this jagged-edged gully that I plunged into, and to this day I cannot decide whether it saved my life, or greatly imperilled it. As to that, those who read this record can be their own judges. I went into it head-first, striking the muddy bottom with an impact that knocked the breath entirely out of me, and sent hot, darting beams of fire out of my eyes. I think I must have been stunned for a few minutes, for when I pulled myself together and started forward gropingly, I heard, all around me, the cautious voices of my pursuers as they went beating back and forth through the brush. I sank silently down again. I could plainly hear the movements of my pursuers. They knew that I lay concealed somewhere in the thicket, and being hunters by instinct and experience, they sought me silently.

I knew full well that these tigers of the plains would find me, and as I lay there on my face, with my heart pounding against the muddy ditch-bottom, I made up my mind to make another desperate bid for my life. In the blackness ahead of me I caught the glitter of black, moving water. A sudden dash would take me to the Red's deep edge. Scarce daring to breathe, I quickly rid myself of my heavy shoes, and squirmed out of my coat. Then my heart missed a beat, for not ten feet ahead of me a shadowy figure clambered down into the ditch, stood there a moment listening, and then, to my vast relief, climbed up the opposite bank and disappeared. I hesitated no longer. Head thrust forward, and parting the thin brush with my hands, I rushed down towards the glistening water, and even as

I dived into the black flood I heard a sudden yelling behind me that told me I had been seen.

Down into the chilly water I went till my fingers clawed the mud of the river bottom. Even then I kept swimming, till, with bursting lungs, I let myself rise gently to the surface. Out into the river I swam gently, with the side of my face lying deep in the water. I could hear the thwarted *Bois-brules* shouting to each other as they raced up and down the river bank, but I knew that none of them would dare to take to the deep and treacherous river in pursuit of me. Suddenly a musket flashed on the river bank, and at the same moment there was a sizzling splash not three feet away from my head. The keen eyes of the *Bois-brules* had detected me. There was another spurt of flame, and again the water spurted up a few yards away from me. Taking a deep breath, I dived again, and turning downstream, I swam swiftly under the water for twenty or thirty yards. When I came up again, a dozen muskets were flashing on the river bank, but the marksmen had fairly lost their target now, for I could hear the lead slapping the water well up the river. So I gave no more heed to the *Bois-brules,* and turning upstream, stretched myself out for a long stern battle with the black river.

For I was not out of danger. What with cloudbursts in the Dakotas, and a wettish spring here, the Red had swollen until its muddy waters crept among the bushes that fringed the normal edge of the deep, implacable stream. To swim the Red in these circumstances was no weakling's task; to breast its heavy, silent current in total darkness made matters greatly worse. More

than once, as I neared midstream, and felt the heavy drag of the current, I had to summon all my resolution to fight down a panicky feeling that, if given rein, would have drowned me like a whelp in a sack. But after that sharp encounter with my overstrained nerves, I became calm and confident, closing my eyes and keeping count of my strokes.

A hundred! Two hundred! I began to tire, so I turned over on my back, and swimming leisurely in that position, rested my head and neck. Now I took to the breast stroke again, and with renewed strength I took fifty strong, full strokes that brought my shoulders well out of the water. Still there was no visible sign of the opposite bank, and in spite of myself black fears and doubts began to gnaw at my vitals. What if I had been making little progress against the heavy current? Was I merely drifting down the middle of the swollen river? "No!" I argued, talking out loudly to the water that licked my cheek. "I cannot be drifting in midstream. I have swum the Red before to-night, and by all reasonable calculations I should be nearing the other side."

"Ah, yes," argued back the twin imps, Doubt and Fear, "but recollect, Donald Stewart, that the Red is running high to-night, and besides which, you forget that your clothes have weakened your stroke."

I was in this turmoil of mind, and thoroughly exhausted, when something brushed my face. At the same moment my hand clawed mud that felt like velvet. My eyes being wearily closed at the moment, I opened them to find myself among a clump of half-submerged willows, and grasping their tough branches for support,

I clambered up the slippery bank till I reached a clean grassy slope. Here I lay for a long time. When I could breathe easily again I got to my feet, and set out as rapidly as I could up the river, for in that direction I had friends.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SIGNAL ACROSS THE RED

I HAD not gone far before I saw before me the dark outline of a small hut. You may see its low ruins if you pass that way to-day; but if you should be of a curious turn of mind, and ask questions about the mouldering pile, few people hereabouts could tell you who lived there in the old days of which I am speaking. For old Ian Marshall and his faithful wife are dead these many years, and there is no stone to mark the place where their bones lie. It was during the winter of 1821 that the aged couple were missed. Some said they died of starvation. Others had it that they were trapped in their burning hut. I incline my ear to both stories. Howbeit, the lonely old couple disappeared from off the face of the earth unnoticed, for Assiniboia was a heedless place in 1821, as I have reason to know. Yet He who sees the sparrow fall would not be heedless of the passing of the Marshalls from this sphere of discord. He would be waiting for them, I am thinking, with the gates of heaven thrown open wide, for they suffered grievously, and were kind.

No light filtered through the cracks in the walls of the rude shelter, and I knew that the inmates had bedded down for the night. I walked quietly round to the door, and knocking gently, called reassuringly to the

sleeping inmates in Gaelic. I heard my name spoken, a light appeared inside, and presently the decrepit door swung inward and I was admitted.

I declare I was touched to the heart's core by what I saw, accustomed as I was to scenes of privation. The little room was bare of furniture. In one corner there was a heap of sacking, or such-like material, which served as a bed for the ancient couple. The bare earth served as flooring, and upturned logs for chairs. In the centre of the floor some flat stones had been arranged to serve as a fireplace, and over this rude invention old Janet Marshall, muttering to herself, was busy with the tinder. She looked up as I entered, and gave a short, sneering laugh.

"Stad!" said old Ian sharply; and the crazed woman put her tinder aside and moved to the pile of sacking in the corner. Here she sat, wringing her fingers and casting wild, hostile glances at me.

"What is the matter?" said Ian Marshall, giving my dripping clothes a swift look.

"The rain! Do you not hear it coming down?" cried the wild-eyed woman from the bed. "He's wet, wet. I see the water on his hair."

"Hush, *a bhean!*" ordered the old man, and the woman dropped her eyes and was silent.

"Pay no heed to her. She is bad at night," said old Ian simply. "Tell me your story. What has happened? How came you to be in the river? I heard shots a while back."

So, as the old man busied himself with the fire, I told him about the massacre, and my escape.

"It had to come. It had to come, *'ille,*" cried the old

man, as he stripped the wet clothes from me. "And they murdered the Governor, ye say? A fine gentleman he was, though too much for his books, 'twas said."

"Ay, he lies in his blood,—him and the rest," croaked the woman from the corner. "I heard them. Janet hears things when the wolves are on the prowl at night. Hark ye, pretty fellow! Can you hear the beasts worrying?"

The poor creature appeared to be listening intently, her vacant eyes fixed on the wall of the hut as if she looked through and beyond it.

"I see them," she cried. "They're lying in the grass there, stiff and cold. Ah! the beasts are at them. They're dragging them away."

Again the woman was silenced by old Ian, and I was glad of it, for her crazed mutterings filled me with terror. Old Ian saw this, for he went over to his wife and spoke to her very quietly, and she lay down and seemed to sleep. "She will be herself again in the morning," said the husband, stepping back to the fire, and I wondered at the kindness of his tones. "You had better get a sleep, *'ille,* while your clothes are drying. I will sit by you and keep the fire going."

He gave me something hot to drink, and in a few minutes a great drowsiness stole over me. The fire swam in front of me, and a buzzing sound filled my ears. I have a faint recollection of lying down, and of an old man spreading something warm over me. The rest of that night is a blank.

I was wakened by a hand shaking my shoulder, and jumped up to find old Ian Marshall leaning over me.

"Get your clothes on, *'ille,"* he was saying, "and we'll be going down to the river. The people overby are being sent away again."

I got into my dried clothing and followed Marshall out into the sunlit bluff in which his dwelling-place nestled. Cautiously, we moved down to the river bank, stopping at last in the shelter of a thick growth of willows. Here we could see up and down the river without exposing ourselves. Presently Marshall's bony hand pressed my arm, and at a sign from him I glanced upstream. Four river-boats, sitting low in the water, were coming down the sunlit river. On they came, and soon I saw that they were freighted with men, women, and children. The oars were plied by gaudily-belted *Bois-brules,* who sang triumphantly in the French tongue. Their dejected prisoners sat in the boats like graven images, staring straight ahead. Not a sound came from them. Once more they were being driven like cattle, but now their grief was voiceless. These four boats carried eighteen women, young and old, who mourned for their murdered men. Every soul in the melancholy flotilla mourned the loss of a relative or friend. Little wonder that they were dumb!

As the last boat, guided by a chanting *Bois-brule,* came opposite, a bairn began to cry dismally, its wail carrying clearly across the water. I saw its mother cower close over it as the angry *Bois-brule* at the stern oar, disturbed at his chanson, shouted a sharp reprimand. But still the babe kept up its whining, and without more ado the *Bois-brule* lifted his heavy oar out of the water, swung it through the air, and with a twist of the wrist let it strike the water in a glancing

manner that blurted a deluge of chilly water over the offending mother and child. There arose a cry like that of a stricken animal; but it was drowned out by the great tow-row of laughter that came from the amused *Bois-brules*.

Then a wilder cry broke out,—an eerie, cackling laugh that ended in a whining shriek. The ribald voyageurs glanced up quickly in our direction, for near us, on the exposed brink of the river bank, stood Janet Marshall. Wild and dishevelled, the woman pointed an accusing arm at the now silent flotilla.

"Away with ye, murderers," she cried. "Ye killed the bonny man from the big house upby. Janet saw ye. I saw the beast standing over his cold corpse. Away with ye! I ken the road you're taking, and the Devil is waiting for ye with a flaming fork in his hands."

"Mon Dieu! Shoot the witch," roared a voice, and quick after the words came a flash and the flat explosion of a musket fired close to the water.

The old woman, apparently unscathed by the cowardly shot, waved her arms wildly and laughed derisively.

"Ye would be shooting old Janet," she cried. "Save your powder and lead, Devil's spawn! It cannot touch me. Away with ye. Make haste, for the Devil is waiting for ye."

She laughed loud and long as the frightened voyageurs sped round the bend. Old Ian was muttering bitterly to himself, but I scarce heard him, for a dreadful fear suddenly took possession of me. Bessie was not among the refugees! My eyes had searched each

boat, and in none of them was there one who sat erect and proud, with hair like the bracken when it turns deep gold in the autumn.

With a queer feeling in my belly, and a tightness about my heart, I started up the river bank, keeping well in the trees. At last I came to the edge of a narrow, V-shaped clearing that extended its point into the mud of the river-bank. I followed the edge of this clearing to the river's bank. There, directly across the shimmering river from me, stood my own house.

Never will I forget the strange hunted feeling that took possession of me as I lay there in the bushes spying upon my own dwelling-place. Nor will I ever forget the feeling of utter desolation that descended upon my spirit as my eyes sought in vain for signs of life about my home. At last I threw myself on my face and prayed fervently for the safety of those who were dearer to me than life itself.

Presently I rose to my feet, and cast my eyes across the quiet river. Was I dreaming? or did I see smoke curling up from my chimney! I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Sure enough, a lazy wisp of smoke curled upward from my roof. I had a mind to rush into the open and shout, but thought better of it, for that course was beset with dangers. For one thing, I had already reasoned that the *Bois-brules* supposed me to be lying in the mud of the river bottom,—a supposition not without convenient features for me in the circumstances. Then, if Bess and my mother had been left in the settlement, plainly it behooved me to act with circumspection for fear of drawing them into danger. That danger threatened them hourly I could not

doubt, for *Bois-brules,* mounted and on foot, moved to and fro on the colony road.

So, with a mind to these things, I kept to my cover and fixed my eyes on our door. At last I saw it open, and my heart went thumping into my throat as the figure of my dear wife framed the little doorway. With a hand on the sneck, she turned her head this way and that, as if listening. Then she stepped outside and walked quickly towards the river. I saw our few hens running with outstretched necks towards her, and a second later I heard the *scraichs* of the hungry fowls. I had not expected the sounds to carry so far, and an idea came to me. I put my hand to my mouth and whistled softly in a trembling manner. It was a trick that my father had taught me on the hills at lambing time, and it had deceived many a whaup. I saw Bessie look up quickly. Again I sent the call across the river. This time, as the familiar sound reached her ears, Bessie dropped the bowl that she carried from the house, and shading her eyes with her hand, gazed fair in my direction.

My time had come. Taking a swift glance up and down the river to assure myself that no eyes but Bessie's were likely to be cast in my direction, I stepped boldly out of my cover, and threw my arms wide as if to say: "All's well." Next moment I was hidden in the bushes again. I saw Bessie raise her hand quickly to her breast. For a long moment she stood gazing across the river, then glancing over her shoulder, she turned and walked quickly to the house.

Looking up, I saw two *Bois-brules,* mounted on piebald ponies, riding past my house on the colony road.

Bess, I guessed, had gone inside to avoid their wandering eyes, for she stood in the doorway and waved her arms. Then she disappeared, but in a moment she was in the doorway again, my mother at her heels. They gazed across the river a moment, then Bessie waved a white cloth very purposefully. I knew then that my loved ones had recognised me, so with a lifted heart I set off through the bushes for the Marshall hut. I had already planned the method of my return to my home. I had had my fill of swimming the Red in the darkness, and I thought to build a raft big enough to carry me across. To my dismay, however, I discovered that Ian Marshall had no axe, and a wide search failed to produce a piece of wood which might serve to carry me across the river.

There was nothing for it but swimming, so I rested until darkness fell. Old Ian came down to the starting place with me, a grassy spot a hundred yards above my house, and when I had stripped myself he produced a bottle of thick oil and rubbed my legs and back with the fluid, telling me that the application would stave off cramps. I waited till the opposite bank was a dark blur, and then I grasped my ancient benefactor by the hand and slid into the chilly water as quietly as an otter.

In a few minutes I was well out in the river, swimming with surprising buoyancy and comfort. Presently I felt the swing of the current on my legs, and I knew that I was nearing the middle of the river. I turned against the current then, and centred all my thoughts on the dark shore that lay in the darkness ahead of me. Suddenly I saw a light swinging to and fro in the dark-

ness above me. It disappeared as suddenly as it appeared. Swimming gently on my breast, I watched for the reappearance of the strange signal. Again it appeared, but this time it appeared in the window of my house. Was it a warning? Again it disappeared. Hearing nothing, I struck out again and soon touched mud. For a long time I crouched on the river bank, listening intently.

Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. I was shivering with the cold, so I rose to my feet and ran quickly to my own door, and putting my mouth to the keyhole, cried upon Bessie to let me in. I heard sharp exclamations, then the bolt shot back and my dear wife's warm arms were around my neck. That was a rapturous moment, but mindful of our danger, I presently put Bessie and my mother aside and saw to it that the window was tightly shuttered. That done, I shed my wet underclothing and slipped gratefully into the warm plaid that my mother held out to me. Blanketed like an Indian Chief, I took my sweet girl on my knee and answered her endless questions, sometimes with the spoken word,—more often with kisses. We were young, and in wedlock but a few weeks.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PORTENTS OF PEACE

TWO weeks passed, and we were not molested. If the victorious *Bois-brules* noticed the smoke curling upwards from my house, they ignored the phenomenon; in truth, they were so drunk with the success of their bloody clash with us at Seven Oaks that they had no eyes for the desolated colony. Nevertheless, I stayed well within my house, and kept my musket loaded and handy. The river was busy. Three days after the massacre I heard singing on the river, and watched Archibald MacLeod pass by with his belated contingent from Fort William; the killing had been accomplished without their assistance. On the third evening of my confinement a canoe slipped in to the bank opposite my house, and a huge, familiar figure stepped to the door. Gladly we admitted Big John the Swampy, and from him I learned something of the state of affairs up-stream.

The *Bois-brules* were in command of Fort Douglas, from which they had driven the terrified remnant of the settlement immediately after the great killing. Thanks to my mother's rheumatism, my loved ones had remained in my house while the rest of the settlers fled to Fort Douglas for protection. Big John had visited the scene of the massacre. The murdered men had been left where they fell, and the wolves were already

busy. Alexander Macdonell had joined Grant at Fort Douglas. Archibald MacLeod sat in Governor Semple's chair. Even as Big John told his tale, the guns barked at the captured Fort in accompaniment to the savage hilarity of its new inmates.

The settlement was no more. There was no sign of the Earl. Suddenly overwhelmed with grief and hopelessness, I dropped my head on my arm and wept.

I will not be wearying myself, or those who read this tale, with accounts of my comings and goings (and hidings) during the months that ensued. Truth to tell, that period of my life is not unpleasant to think about, for although my movements were restricted, I was constantly with my loved ones. True, danger threatened us, but it was of the chancy sort that makes the one in danger feel that he is playing fugitive in an exciting game. Then, too, I learned from Big John that the usurpers, grown fearful of the consequences of Seven Oaks, were cultivating the friendship of the Indians. As the weeks passed I became accustomed to my new mode of living, and risked exposing myself.

Then came the night when the knock sounded on the door! We had not yet fallen deeply into sleep when the summons came. Instantly Bessie's hand covered my mouth, and she put her lips to my ear and whispered softly:

"Lie still, Donald! They must not know that you are here with us. I will try to send them away."

While she whispered her wise warning, the knocking on the door was loudly repeated, and the door-sneck roughly rattled.

"Open the door," growled the would-be intruder.

"You hear me, Madame? Let me in or I will smash the door down."

Bessie sat up in bed with a well-feigned sleepy exclamation, and in a husky, impatient voice cried out: "Go away, please. This is no time of the night to be banging on an old woman's door."

The ruffian at the door was not deceived by Bessie's poor little trick. He laughed softly,—as ugly a laugh as ever smote my ears,—and his voice, eager and menacing, came through the keyhole.

"Let me in, *ma cherie,* or I push the door down queek. I count t'ree, and eef eet is not open, it go smash. You hear me, eh? All right, Madame! One! Two! . . . T'ree."

I could hear him grunt as he put his shoulder to the door, and at the first crack of the splintering woodwork I was on my feet, and had thrust my trembling wife behind me. The door gave way at the hinges and fell inward suddenly,—the man sprawling over it. He saw me even as he fell, and he gave a snarl like a dog and caught at me.

Now I can truthfully state that I purposed killing the ruffian in cold blood. There was no other thought in my mind at the time. Moreover, though it is a bestial thing to say, I purposed killing him with my bare hands. So I crouched there, legs set apart and teeth bared, and let him get to his feet. He was at me like a tiger, but the gasp that came out of his throat was born of deadly fear. Yet he was dangerous, and I thought it best to close with him before he could lay hand to a weapon. Next moment we were at grips, taut and silent as we tested each other's strength. My as-

sailant was a bulky and powerful man, but he had not my strength of arm and shoulders, and slowly but surely I bore him down. Then, when his neck was like to snap, the fellow gave his head a sudden twist and sank his teeth deep in my arm. I could have screamed with the pain of his grinding teeth, and in a blind rage I released my grip and sank my thumbs into his thick neck. He rained blows on my face till the blood coursed down my chin, but I sank my fingers the deeper in his neck. At last he ceased his desperate contortions, and I threw him back on the door he had broken down, an inert mass with a livid, distorted face.

Then I became aware of Bessie's voice, and rose to my feet.

"Is he dead?" cried my wife fearfully.

I knelt down and put my hand on the man's heart, and feeling it beat, I turned to my wife.

"We must get him away from here," I said. "I have a mind to throw him into the river, where better men than him lie cold to-night. But I have a better plan. We will send him down the river in a boat, even as our own folk were sent."

So I took him by the heels, and followed by Bessie, dragged him down to the river's edge, where our little punt lay on the glassy water. I laid him on his back in the bottom of the punt, and throwing the oars out on the grass, pushed our strangely-laden craft out into the stream. In a few minutes it had drifted out of sight in the darkness, and we returned to the house.

Thus it came about that a certain *Bois-brule* called Pierre Boucher was seen next day standing in a punt that drifted along in the middle of the Red ten miles

below Fort Douglas. Boucher had his own story for the Indians that brought him ashore, but whether the Crees believed him is a matter for grave doubt. It is worth noting that two Indians, smiling deeply, brought my punt back to me, and after they had smoked my tobacco for an hour, one of them looked at me shrewdly and said:

"Boucher poor *voyageur!* Him borrow boat. Him forget oars!"

The Crees could see though a plank as far as most folk! What they guessed at I never knew, nor does it matter now, for Boucher no longer haunts these parts.

My encounter with the ruffian proved to be the only exciting incident of my period of hiding. After that, our house was left alone, and as the summer opened out I began to move about more freely. In time, of course, it became known to the Northwesters that I was alive and active, yet I was not molested, for a measure of peace had fallen upon Assiniboia. The reason for it became manifest when Miles Macdonell, at the head of a large party of trained soldiers, marched out of the East in December and captured Fort Douglas. I saw much of the Captain that winter, yet I stayed close to my own door, for as the days shortened my dear wife became less and less like herself, being far gone with Ewen Douglas. After he came, I stayed closer than ever to my doorstep, for my mother was failing fast. She passed away peacefully in the spring, and we laid her to rest in the old kirkyard, in the presence of every man in the colony. Even the Northwesters at Fort Gibraltar came to the funeral, a thing that moved me strangely.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE EARL ARRIVES AT THE FORKS

THE morning of June 27th, 1817, will ever be green in my memory. . . . I mind it was a soft sunny morning, and I was near asleep between the plough handles when a faint cry caught my ear. I glanced along the furrow, and saw Bessie running towards me, waving her apron to attract my attention. I let the reins fall at my feet and set out to meet her, wondering what fresh trouble could be brewing. In a few minutes she came panting to me, and when she found her voice she cried: "He's here, Donald!"

"Who's here, lass?" I asked, wondering at her excitement.

"The Earl of Selkirk himself," cried my wife. "He looked in at the door on his way past, and his kiss is still warm on my fingers. And, oh! Donald, he wants to see you." And the mother of my bairns, her that for sound sense is namely, broke out weeping as if her heart was broken. I hastened back to my cropping horses, and, unhitching them, set off for the house. As I washed and dressed myself, Bessie came to herself and told me that the Earl had arrived without warning that morning from Upper Canada.

"I was baking," said Bessie, "when I heard voices at the open door. I turned from the scones on the girdle and there, standing in the door, was the Earl,

with half the settlement peeping round his legs. Before I could wipe the meal from my hands, he doffed his hat and said: 'Have I the honour of meeting the wife of the son of Ewen Stewart?' Not a word could I say, Donald, and next thing I knew he took my hand and kissed my fingers. And they were white with meal!"

With a strange feeling urging me, I took the road, now busy with excited settlers, that led to the Governor's house. Half an hour later I was shown into the presence of the man whose dream had brought so much suffering and sorrow to me and mine. When my eyes first rested on him he was standing with his back to the Governor's open fireplace. I carry a picture of him in my mind,—a tall, slender young man with a sad, yet noble, face. When the Governor presented me, his lordship stepped towards me warmly, and gripping my hand hard, said:

"This is a great pleasure, Mr. Stewart. The Governor has told me about you and yours. I am proud to meet the worthy son of a worthy father."

I declare there was so much manly grace in his tone, and genuine feeling, that my heart went out to him in a great surge. For here, assuredly, was a man of gentle instincts and high courage, with the look of one whose soul had been in travail.

"You will eat with us, Mr. Stewart?" he asked after a brief silence. "I have much to learn about the Colony —and there are some other matters that will press less heavily on my mind after I have discussed them with judicious, understanding friends."

Presently we sat down at the Governor's well-or-

dered table, and during the repast the Earl plied me with shrewd questions relating to the history and welfare of the settlement. Greatly pleased he was to learn that we had fallen upon the strange conceit of calling the new colony by the old name—Kildonan. At first he received my sombre information with calm dignity; but as the harsh story unfolded itself, his kind, sensitive mouth hardened, and a look of pain came into his eyes.

"Gentlemen," he said at last, "I can hardly believe that men could be so heartless and unscrupulous. Yet the facts you have laid before me at this table are of a piece with the sinister, obstructive spirit that animates the officialdom of Upper Canada. There I encountered obstructions at every turn, and but for the dauntless heart and nimble wit of Lady Selkirk, my friends, I might not be here to-day.

"Think of it! Sir Gordon Drummond, the Governor-General, could promise Selkirk no more than half a dozen men as a bodyguard on his journey from Montreal to the banks of the Red River! And that paltry concession was grudgingly made. My request that I be appointed a Justice of the Peace in Upper Canada and the Indian Territories was not granted until I demanded an explanation of the delay. Never have I encountered such unprincipled, picayune, and wholly scurrilous men boasting of the support and countenance of His Majesty's Government. Montreal is truly a hive of parochial intrigue,—a political quagmire dominated by the Northwest partners.

"I left Montreal on the 17th of June of last year, after engaging my Swiss soldiers at Montreal and

Kingston. As you know, I sent Captain Miles Macdonell and his little party ahead with instructions to join Colin Robertson here. The Captain knows how earnest were my instructions that he avoid all possibilities of conflict on the journey. I counselled Captain Matthey similarly when I despatched him with seventy men from Lachine a few days later. Pay strict heed to the facts I am now setting baldly before you, Gentlemen, for they have borne heavily upon my mind these past few months, and I seek your calm judgment of my course. It is a great relief, at any rate, to unburden my mind in this friendly room.

"We rapidly passed through Lake Ontario, and leaving Toronto behind, cut across the country to Georgian Bay and passed on to Sault Ste. Marie and Drummond Island. Soon after leaving Drummond Island we overtook Captain Matthey and his detachment. So far my plans had evolved smoothly. As we neared Fort William, however, we met Captain Macdonell, and learned from him that a disordered state of affairs prevailed at the Forks. The poor fellow, mistaking my bodily exhaustion for sickness of the spirit, had not the heart to tell me all the story, but on the following morning, as I lay in bed, Doctor Allen, my physician, told me about the massacre of my people here at Seven Oaks. As you may well believe, I was stunned by the terrible news. I learned, too, that Lagimoniere was a prisoner in Fort William. The gallant fellow left Montreal on New Year's Day, carrying my instructions to Governor Semple at Red River, but the Northwest officials laid careful plans to capture him, and with the aid of Indians, succeeded. All

my dispatches were taken from him and read by the Northwesters, and Lagimoniere was put in irons.

"I had to make a swift decision as to my immediate plans. Two courses seemed to be clearly defined before me: I could proceed on my circuitous route to Red River, and there, without supplies or reinforcements, take chances with a savage and stoutly fortified enemy; or I could turn aside and strike boldly at the stronghold of the miscreants who had dealt so barbarously with us. I chose to take the latter course, and I will abide by the consequences."

There came a weary look into the blue eyes of the Earl as he uttered these words, and he scanned our sober faces closely as if to read the thoughts that were forming in our minds. But we said nothing, and he continued his strange narrative.

"I resolved, as a first step, to liberate the men from the settlement who were imprisoned in Fort William, and to put the Northwest ringleaders, who were then in conference at the Fort, under arrest. Yet when I sought to induce the local Justices of the Peace to make the arrests, I encountered supine and baffling cowardice. I had no time to lose, and although I was duly appreciative of the delicacy of the position in which I stood as a party interested, I determined to act for myself in the capacity of a magistrate in the Indian Territories. Accordingly I summoned de Meuron and his soldiers to Thunder Bay, and on the 12th of August our twelve bateaux put ashore near Fort William, and our tents were soon pitched about a mile above the Northwest Fort.

"I immediately demanded the liberation of our men,

and early next morning I sent two constables with warrants against McGillivray. The wily scoundrel, having learned that I was camped at his door with trained soldiers at my command, offered no resistance, putting himself in my hands with an air of sorely injured innocence. Two of his associates offered themselves as bail, but I spurned the crafty compromise, and so McGillivray, debaucher of men, went into irons for the first time.

"When the other warrants were read, an attempt at resistance was made, but it was rendered abortive by Captain D'Orsonnens, who rushed some of his men into the stockade, at the same time signalling for reinforcements from the Meuron camp. It was a braver deed than would appear from my telling of it, for within the walls of the Fort there were no less than two hundred Northwesters, besides scores of Indians. Before these could collect their wits, however, D'Orsonnens had seized the Northwest field-pieces, and, this done, his command of the situation was not challenged further."

The Earl had now left his chair by the table, and walked nervously to and fro as he poured his tale into our ears. It was plain to see that the affair at Fort William troubled him greatly,—and plainer still to see that he welcomed the opportunity of venting his distracting thoughts in the matter before a sympathetic tribunal.

"But I speak much too generously of our enemies," he continued. "I should have said that there was no open challenge of our command. Of clandestine preparations of hostility, however, there was no lack of

evidence. Happily for us, this evidence was noticed in time, and a properly warranted search revealed a veritable arsenal in the hay-loft. Clearly, it was the intention of our prisoners, who had been generously patrolled, to turn upon us treacherously in the night. What could honest men expect to find in the barricaded abode of such unscrupulous men? I tell you, Gentlemen, the place was packed with the most damning evidence of the wickedness of its tenants. In the Council Chamber we found letters of mine that had been stolen from Lagimoniere. Ay, and the seals were broken,—noble work, surely, to be carried on at the Northwest Council table. Thirty-three bales of our furs, all from our Qu'Appelle Post, were brought to light by search-warrants."

The Earl ceased speaking, and turning quickly on his heel, came close up to us, fixing us with his eyes. They were as hard as blue steel, and the blood had withdrawn from his face, leaving it strangely pallid. When he started to speak again his voice was almost a whisper, and yet so vibrant with cold passion that we sat staring at him as if transfixed.

"Seven Oaks!" were the words that came at last from his white lips, and with their utterance he seemed to pause as if waiting for his voice to come back to him; he continued: "Gentlemen, we found in the North-west offices at Fort William a list of the names of the half-breeds who murdered my people at Seven Oaks! Mark you, Gentlemen, all these names excepting thirteen had been marked off as having received habiliments from the North-West Company! You seem

shocked! But I have more to tell that bears upon this appalling crime. A search of the Fort revealed twenty bales of habiliments, each one marked with the name of the half-breed who was to receive it. There were thirteen names, exactly corresponding to the names of the individuals not ticked off in the first list we discovered! Need I say more?"

As if suddenly overcome with weariness the Earl sat down.

"I have spoken freely to you," he said, giving us a keen glance, "and now I would have your well-considered opinion of the policy I pursued at Fort William. God knows, my friends, I have heard the opinions of others regarding the matter. Speak up, and do not let your hearts unduly influence your minds."

The Governor, well warmed by his own wine, brought his fist down on the table with a thump.

"God bless my soul, Your Lordship," he exclaimed blankly, "I have never heard of such criminality. It is amazing,—perfectly amazing. Think of the scoundrels rewarding the butchers of Seven Oaks. You did well, my Lord, to turn the rascals out of their nest."

The Earl turned to me.

"Your tongue seems heavy, Mr. Stewart," he said, smiling faintly. "Is it because you, too, see weaknesses in my policy at Fort William?"

"I will not be saying that I do not see weaknesses, Your Lordship," I replied.

At my words the Earl gave a start, and looked at me with cold, questioning eyes.

"What course would you have taken, Mr. Stewart, had you been in my place?" he asked, and I noticed that his voice was dry.

I got to my feet, and held the Earl's eyes with my own.

"You ask a plain question, my Lord," I said, "and I will be giving you a plain answer. Had I been in your place at Fort William, I would have done as you did, God helping me, for, my Lord, it was the way of a man of spirit and honour."

CHAPTER XXX

THE EARL CONCLUDES HIS TALE

OUR hands clasped as I uttered these words, and his Lordship's mouth twitched and his voice broke completely as he replied: "Ah, Mr. Stewart, I should have known. I should have known. Forgive me for my churlishness. I have been labouring under great worries."

He sat down beside us again, and in livelier tones completed the telling of his story.

"It was after securing proof of the sinister connection of the North-West Company with Seven Oaks that I resolved to winter at Fort William. To return to Montreal, after learning of Seven Oaks, was unthinkable. On the other hand, I was confronted with the fact that the Northwesters had confiscated our stores at Red River. Even at Michillimackinac our enemies had, with sinister foresight, bought up all the stores. Manifestly, I could not invite untold suffering for my men, and subsequent disaster, by pushing on to Red River for the winter. Yet a solemn duty confronted me,—the cutting up by the root of one of the most abominable combinations that ever was suffered to exist in the British Dominions.

"It was at this juncture that I was forced to venture upon more dangerous ground. I apprehended the danger,—a legal one,—yet I could not see how I could well

avoid it. Even now, in the fierce light of the protracted legal battle that my action precipitated, I cannot see what other course lay open to me at the time. I bought the Northwest supplies at Michillimackinac,—paying twelve hundred pounds for them. I did not propose the transaction; it was repeatedly urged upon me by MacKenzie, the properly authorized agent of the North-West Company. So that fairness would govern the transaction,—surely the most unfortunate in which a Douglas ever took part,—I agreed to submit all subsequent disputes as to values to arbitration, and executed a conveyance of three thousand pounds a year, to be held in trust by the arbitrators till all awards were made. It gradually dawned upon me that my contract with MacKenzie would have disastrous results for the Northwesters, in that it would keep a considerable part of their capital in a state of inaction for an indefinite period.

"I am bound to say, however, that the realisation of this fact gave rise to no misgivings in my mind; I do not pretend to deny that at first I was glad I had framed my bargain so as to limit in some degree the resources of the Northwesters for carrying on a system of lawless violence against me. That was my first feeling in regard to the matter. Further reflection, however, indicated the imprudence of the whole affair, —from the legal standpoint. It gave my enemies and half-hearted friends a fresh bone to chew upon, and scoundrelly lawyers in Upper Canada magnified the improprieties of the transaction until they had made it appear that I had deliberately committed a fearful crime.

"The Government looked on at all this hypocritical hubbub and rubbed its hands with satisfaction. Selkirk's back was once more against the wall, and that spectacle has long been relished by the officialdom of Upper Canada. Yet the Government had no time to scrutinise the affairs of Red River; it was too busy confounding Selkirk to find time to look into the circumstances surrounding the brutal massacre of a score of loyal Britons here at Seven Oaks. Well, the Government was at last stirred to action, as you already know, but I air no secret, Gentlemen, when I tell you that the Commission would never have been appointed but for the unwearying solicitations of the one who, almost alone in Upper Canada, kept her devotion to me at white heat.

"You are familiar with the first sign of the recrudescence of my authority at Red River,—probably more familiar with the gallant exploit of Captain Macdonell and Captain D'Orsonnens than I am. Indeed, I have received only the bare official reports of the taking of Fort Daer and Fort Douglas, yet these terse reports plainly indicate the soldierly skill and courage of my gallant men."

"They made short work of Fort Daer and Fort Douglas, and that is the truth, my Lord," said I, for Miles Macdonell had often told me the story of the taking of the Forts. And a terrible fine story it was, especially if the Captain was properly humoured in the telling of it. Miles Macdonell and Captain D'Orsonnens set out from Rainy Lake in the fore-end of November. They had twenty-eight 'de Meurons' behind them, and two small cannons set on sledges. Four

hundred miles they trudged on their snowshoes, but at last and long they got to Pembina, and on the last day of the year they pointed the noses of their guns at Fort Daer. The Northwesters in the Fort were for defending themselves, but Macdonell came rampaging across the river at the head of his men, and when he got up to the walls of the Fort the carles inside had no wish to fight. Maybe they had heard the Captain ordering his men to the attack. He was a terrible fine hand at ordering soldiers, was Captain Macdonell. Anyway, the taking of Fort Daer was a poor ploy for him, so he led his men North towards Fort Douglas. Not so easily as I write it, though, for the winter had its teeth in the country. What with frozen feet and slack bellies, the soldiers had a bad time of it. But Macdonell got them here at last, and they went into camp in the woods ten miles out from here. Without wasting any time, they prepared to take Fort Douglas. The Fort was crowded to the doors with Northwesters, every man of them nursing a loaded musket. The only mistake they made was taking to their beds at night, for Miles Macdonell looked in on them after midnight. It was grand to hear the Captain tell about it. The moon was bright, and he took ladders with him that his men had made in the bush. Then, as the Captain expressed it, the Fort was invested and carried by escalade. There was a bit of a scuffle as the soldiers dropped in on the sleeping Northwesters. A few heads were cracked on both sides, and one poor fellow had his eye knocked out with a musket barrel; but Captain Macdonell's forehandedness prevented the Northwesters from using their weapons to advantage. Long before day-

light the Company's flag was flying from the staff, and McLellan and a score of his men were trussed up like dead grouse."

I told the story, as I had heard it, to the Earl, and it did me good to watch his face as I repeated the military sayings of Miles Macdonell. When I came to the part where, as the Captain put it, the Fort was invested and carried by escalade, the Earl threw back his head and laughed outright like a boy,—the first and only laugh, I doubt not, that the sore-tried Earl had enjoyed since setting foot in Canada.

"A hearty fellow is Captain Macdonell," said his Lordship when my story ended. "A truer man never followed the Douglas banner. A trifle hasty, perhaps, but sound at the core. Ah, yes, sound at the core. God bless him!"

There was further talk about the Earl's legal battles, and his eyes flashed like new ice when he told us how the Northwesters, aided and abetted by the magistrates of Upper Canada, tried to arrest him.

"They came with their soiled and spurious warrant," he exclaimed, his voice thin with a rare contempt. "It was handed to me by an old man,—a dotard who was never by any chance sober after midday. And Selkirk was expected to surrender himself to this warrant, —in face of the fact that Mr. Keveny was brutally murdered by the agent of the Northwest Company, to whose warrant he had surrendered. Well, Gentlemen, I did not surrender to the warrant, and then you should have heard the wolves howling at my heels! Selkirk had resisted the execution of a legal process of arrest! He was a dangerous outlaw! A tempest raged in a

tea-cup. The affidavit of any maudlin partisan was good enough to condemn me. And condemned I was,—without being accorded a hearing. Can you believe me, gentlemen, when I say that the Colonial Office issued directions that destroyed my case? Copies of these directions were plentiful amongst the executive and judiciary of Upper Canada.

"But that is now over. Truth will prevail in the end, and in the confidence that justice will ultimately be done to me, I put little importance on any wound which may be aimed at my personal feelings. The settlement here transcends all else. I know of no consideration that would induce me to abandon it. I ground this resolution not only on the principle of supporting the settlers whom I have already sent here, but also because I consider my character at stake upon the success of the undertaking, and upon proving that it is neither a wild and visionary scheme nor a trick and a cloak to cover sordid plans of aggression.

"I have drawn the sword, and thrown away the scabbard. All that I am,—all that I have,—is now irrevocably pledged on behalf of this colony. The first seeds of a civilised community have been sown. The day will yet come when these virgin plains will support tens of thousands of Anglo-Saxon families. The British Isles are already over-populated, and our statesmen are indeed blind if they fail to seek, and find, new soil,—British soil,—for the Nation's surplus artisans and farmers. These thwarted people, victims of a shackled National trade and a stupid and greedy landlordism, will write the history of the British Dominions,—or such a history will never be written.

"This settlement must live! Here is land,—millions of acres of fertile soil awaiting the plough. Along this river,—it reminds me of the Nith as it winds towards Lincluden,—there is room for thousands of farmers, the foundations of a prosperous city. True, there will be problems crying for solution as the settlement grows. A proper road to the Hudson Bay must be built, so that these immense plains will have their natural outlet to the world of commerce.

"But a fertile soil, Gentlemen, is the basis of all civilised development. A fertile soil and intelligent and self-reliant people! There you have the primary elements of human progress. Bring them together, and the structure of civilisation rears itself as surely as the flower expands in the sunlight! The fur trader must give way to the coloniser. The Fort must yield to the farm. Faith and work must triumph over cynicism and inaction. Our statesmen must catch the song of the lark, rather than strain to hear the squeaking of mice.

"But I have talked over-long, gentlemen. The time has slipped away, and I am anxious to go out among the settlers."

Saying which he rose, and the Governor ordered his carriage to the door. Presently we set out for the low-roofed homesteads by the river. Along the road the bairns waved their little hands and cried after us shrilly, and men and women, fair and dusky, came to their doors and, with one accord, followed us, crowding silently about our slow-moving vehicle. At last we came opposite the little kirkyard, marked only by a few poor headstones and fresh mounds of earth. At

sight of these the Earl's face grew grave, and he requested the Governor to stop. Stepping out of the carriage, and shaking hands with the people who surged about him, he walked slowly over to the last resting-place of our kith and kin. Reverently he doffed his hat, and his lips moved as if in silent prayer. Presently he turned to us, and in a quiet voice said: "It is my wish that the Parish be called Kildonan. Here you shall build your Church, and over there, on that pretty spot across that little stream, you shall build a school for your children."

Then for a while he conversed kindly with the folk who crowded about him, and when at last he started back to the Governor's house, a great cheer rose up behind him, men and women joining their voices in a swelling, heartfelt cry of loyalty for this gentle-voiced man for whom they had suffered so grievously.

Before the sun went down that day, Fort Douglas was crowded with Indians and *Bois-brules,* for the news of the arrival of the Earl had travelled fast and far. Grave, blanket-clad representatives of the Saulteaux, Assiniboine, Chippeway, and Killistine Nations padded about the walls of the Fort, or sat smoking gravely by their wigwams on the river bank. The tribesmen were uneasy. Had not the *Bois-brules* said that the Great White Chief was come at last to drive them from their hunting grounds?

CHAPTER XXXI

THE TREATY THAT BROUGHT PEACE

PEGUIS, chief of the Saulteaux, was speaking gravely to his kinsmen. Squatted near him were Machewheoeab, Onckidoat, Mechkadewikonair, and Kayajieskebinoa,—all mighty men among the Indian Nations. Strange stories had reached the ears of the Indians, but Peguis, who was wise in the ways of the white man, had seen the Great White Chief. The rolling of Indian drums at a dog-feast on the river bank blended with the deep voice of the chief spokesman of the red men.

The Great White Chief was a young man, Peguis told the Council of the Nations. The Great White Chief had a skin like a woman, and there was no thunder in his voice, but much wisdom. The Great White Chief was very sad because his people had been slain. He did not laugh, and did not put fire water before the Indians. Yet the Great White Chief had told Peguis that the Nations would not be driven from their hunting grounds. The Great White Chief did not lie like the *Bois-brules;* he had a book written by Kisshamanatou! The Great White Chief did not claim the land along the rivers. He would buy it from the Saulteaux and Killistine Nations. The Great White Chief was generous, and a friend of the Nations.

Far into the night the Council of the Nations squat-

ted round the fire of Peguis, the Saulteaux Chief. Peguis had spoken wisely. The Great White Chief was truly the friend of the Nations,—and he had much silver! The Council would make a treaty with him. The Great White Chief was King George's man, and did not lie.

So it came about that the Earl met the Council of the Nations the following day, and after a great palaver and much rustling of parchment, the Indians agreed to sell the Earl a strip of land on each side of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Forthwith the whispering lawyers put their heads together again, for they had stumbled against an unexpected obstacle. How deep should these strips of land be? The Indian Chiefs were noncommittal. The white men used strange measurements. Peguis was cautious. Finally the Earl suggested that the land should run out from the rivers as far as a horse could be seen on the level prairie. This method of measurement instantly commended itself to the Indian negotiators; and so, with due ceremony, they made over to King George III,[1] for the benefit of the Earl of Selkirk, their rights in the strip of country extending along each bank of the Red River, from its mouth at Lake Winnipeg to its confluence with the Red Lake River in the United States, and along the Assiniboine River, from its junction with the Red River at Fort Garry, to Muskrat River. The consideration on account of which this fertile land was ceded was an annual payment of two hundred pounds' weight of tobacco,—of which one-half was to be paid

[1] A necessary precaution, the extinction of Indian titles in favour of private parties being illegal.—J. H. McC.

the Saulteaux Chiefs at Fort Garry, and the other half to the Killistine Chiefs at Portage la Prairie. In turn the Chiefs bent over the parchment and laboriously put their marks on the treaty,—strange animal designs that gave a barbarous aspect to the notable document.

Then followed much speech-making, for the Chiefs had many things on their minds, and craved an opportunity to vent their pent-up oratory. Peguis was brief in his utterance, but the old man had barbs on his tongue, and when, near to the end of his oration, he swept his arm towards the sneering *Bois-brules* who lounged around, and cried out in a voice of thunder: "We do not acknowledge these men as an independent tribe," a hush fell over the strange assemblage. For these words so boldly uttered by Peguis were dangerous words, and in other circumstances, I doubt not, might have caused a bloody encounter.

As it was, the insulted *Bois-brules* made no outcry, for the Saulteaux Chief was a warrior to be reckoned with that day,—a hundred tawny braves of his tribe standing behind him as he spoke. Moreover, the Great White Chief and his soldiers quietly surveyed the proceedings.

Kayajieskebinoa, Chief of the Assiniboines, bounded to his feet as soon as Peguis ceased speaking, and for ten minutes or more the colossal orator addressed the Earl in fulsome terms, reiterating his flatteries with great earnestness. Then followed Mechkadewikonair with a long rigmarole about the doubts and fears that had found a dwelling-place in his mind. I declare it was comical to see him sweat and expand like a turkey-

cock as he approached the climax of his speech. He swept his blanket wide, and turning his face upward to the sky, roared out: "Dark clouds have overwhelmed me. I was a long time in doubt and difficulty, but now I begin to see clearly, and I am happy." The concluding words he shouted out in a tone of fierce defiance, and the effect was so comical that I was greatly strained in the effort to keep from laughing outright.

But indeed it was no laughing matter, for these selfsame Indian Chiefs were men of substance, and the marks that they put upon the treaty parchment made our homesteads secure, and made an end of the bloody strife that white men began in this territory. The dawn of a new day was ushered in by the dull throbbing of Indian tom-toms. The iron ring of oppression had been broken. The plough had triumphed over the trap.

It was past midnight. The sky was an inky-blue vault crowded with stars that glittered like diamonds. The Indian tom-toms no longer throbbed. Silence lay along the tented river bank like a shroud.

Suddenly a new sound, wild and challenging, shattered the solemnity of the night. Under the shadowed walls of the Fort a kilted figure paced slowly back and forth. It was Duncan MacDonald. His eyes were almost closed, and he stepped so slowly that he seemed to be testing the ground like a blind man, with never a straightening of his body. The drones were mellow in the night air, and the chanter sweet as a lover's voice under his dancing fingers.

Presently his heels came together and his head went

back and the drones clicked as they slid into the crook of his arm.

A window in the Fort opened, and the Earl of Selkirk peered out into the darkness.

"Thank you for the tune, piper," he cried. "There is a fine familiar lilt to it. May I ask the name of it?"

The piper saluted the dim figure at the window.

"It's an old tune, your Lordship," he replied, "and the name it goes by is 'The Glen Is Mine.' "

"The Glen Is Mine!" repeated the figure at the window softly. "A fine tune. A fine tune, indeed!"

The piper moved away.

For a long time the figure at the window sat looking out at the winking stars. The light of a new day was breathing ere his vigil ended.

EPILOGUE

A CONCLUDING WORD

THERE is much more that I could tell respecting the settlement, and if I ever recover from the fatigue that now lies so heavy on my mind from the writing down of my present narrative, I may finish the tale. For peace did not settle down upon us with the signing of the treaty. Nor for many a weary day after.

True, the coming of the Earl made an end of the Northwesters' persecution of the settlement; but no sooner came a cessation of this unseemly human strife than the wrath of God seemed to descend upon us. Plagues of devouring locusts settled on our crops, leaving no green leaf or twig behind them. Then came the terrible days between the autumn of 1826 and midsummer of the following year. Came first the great snow-storm of mid-December that drove the providing buffalo deep into the plains. Over night we found ourselves snow-bound and face to face with starvation. The buffalo hunters from the settlement were caught empty-handed in that memorable blizzard, and ere they reached Pembina they had resorted to the chewing of the raw hides of their butchered dogs in order to keep their bodies and souls together. Whole families, men, women, and children, were frozen to death as they struggled over the frozen wastes towards Pembina

—and food. I may yet tell, in proper detail, that story,—surely the grimmest that ever pen was set to the telling of.

Then the spring that followed brought the great flood, which transformed the whole valley of the Red River into a tempestuous lake. Our houses were torn away by the angry waters and engulfed in Lake Winnipeg, and we were forced to take refuge on Stony Mountain and Bird's Hill, even as Noah took refuge on the mountain of Armenia.

These calamities came, were endured, and the settlement survived. Verily, in His infinite wisdom the Lord laid affliction upon our loins, but at the last brought us out into a wealthy place.

There is much that remains to be said, also, respecting the Earl's legal battles with the Northwesters and their friends, which began after he left us. Right heartily could I set myself to the telling of that tale of intrigue, for that would be to expose, in a measure, the cunning and blackguardly deeds that were done here, and in Upper Canada, in high places and low, by those who, to the bitter end, sought to frustrate his Lordship's plans.

For I, Donald Stewart, say that these cowardly machinations surely laid low, in far-away France, the kindest and noblest man that ever set foot on Red River soil.

Yet the spirit of Thomas Douglas hovers about Kildonan; and we, his abiding friends, have builded his memorial, even as Nehemiah set about the building up of Jerusalem against the scorn and violence of Sanballat the Horonite. So when Duncan MacDonald

paces slowly by the river overby, as is his wont when the long fore-nights are warm and still, and the lilting notes of "The Glen Is Mine" come wafting over to us, we stand at the door, my wife and I, with full hearts and a long thought for the one who lies lonely ayont the seas; one who trod the winepress alone that we might abide here in peace.

GLOSSARY

Ayont—beyond.
Byre—cow-stable.
Claymore—double-handled Highland sword.
Cruisie—primitive lamp.
Dirk—the Highland dagger.
Douce—sweet.
Fushionless—inadequate.
Moidered—confused.
Scraich—scream.
Shieling—crofter's hut.
Skarrow—reflection of fire in sky.
Spreidh—a drove of cattle.
Stound—throb.
Thrawn—ill-tempered.
Tyke—dog.
Weans—young children.
Withie—wooden door bolt.

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